

**The aesthetics of Takarazuka: a case study on *Erizabēto – ai to shi no rondo***

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By

Daniela Florentina Mageanu

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the various elements of Takarazuka's performance style, and analyses how they influence the adaptation of pieces which fall outside this style.

As a case study this thesis will examine the world-wide acclaimed Viennese German-language musical *Elisabeth* (1992), which was materially altered in order to suit Takarazuka's established style, and became *Erizabēto – ai to shi no rondo* (*Erizabēto – the rondo of love and death*, 1996). Employing the existing framework for the analysis of the theatre, by theatre scholars Yamanashi Makiko and Marumoto Takashi, this thesis will provide a detailed account of Takarazuka's style elements, and show how pieces which fall outside this style are treated. The conversation on Takarazuka's performance style is recently started in English, and this thesis is intended to add to this. The Takarazuka version, *Erizabēto – ai to shi no rondo* is contrasted with the original Viennese in terms of 1) plot, dialogue and characterisation; and 2) lighting and scenery, and wardrobe to illustrate Takarazuka's adaptation process.

Upon doing this analysis, it became apparent that Takarazuka has an established style which centres on romanticism, fantasy and visual richness, and that pieces that do not originally fit within this style are thoroughly altered in order to become appropriate for the Takarazuka stage.

## Introduction

The Takarazuka Revue is a popular musical theatre company in Japan today. Takarazuka stands out from amongst other theatres through its composition of mostly young, unmarried female performers. They perform either as “men”, *otokoyaku* (lit. male role), or women, *musumeyaku* (lit. daughter/young woman role). Over its 101 year history it has developed its own set of aesthetics and a style of performance marked by opulence and romance, which is instantly recognisable. For ease of reading, “Takarazuka” will be used to refer to the Revue, while the city will be referred to as “Takarazuka city”. Japanese names, unless otherwise mentioned, will be in the standard Japanese order with the last name given first.

This thesis explores the Takarazuka theatre and its specific style of performance. It is intended to establish what Takarazuka’s core aesthetics are, and analyse how they are portrayed through staging and performance techniques. This thesis will also focus on the way in which the Takarazuka aesthetics affect the adaptation of pieces which have aesthetics markedly different from those that are now associated with Takarazuka’s established style. One such example is *Elisabeth* (1992), the Viennese, German-language musical, which was adapted to Takarazuka as *Erizabēto - ai to shi no rondo* (lit. Elisabeth: the *rondo* of love and death, 1996) and which I will use as a case-study. What makes this piece suitable for a case study is the fact that *Elisabeth* was markedly outside Takarazuka’s typical performance style containing elements that would have been unsuitable for the Takarazuka stage, such as a main character plagued by the desire to die, and a lack of romance in the interaction between the main characters. Most noticeable was the absence of a lead male character and romantic hero,

which is one of Takarazuka's premises for its performances. By examining and analysing how *Elisabeth* was adapted to the Takarazuka stage, what elements were removed or added, and what the final result was, we can develop a better understanding of the aesthetics of Takarazuka.

Since its introduction into the Takarazuka repertoire in February 1996, there have been 8 different versions of this play performed over the years. According to the theatre's official website, it has been performed over 500 times as of 2005. Moreover, as of 2007, the audience numbers had surpassed 15 million.<sup>1</sup> Over its long history Takarazuka has restaged pieces that were particularly well received, however the only other musical play that has been restaged more often than *Erizabēto - ai to shi no rondo* and in a similar time frame has been the renowned, lavish musical production set at the court of Marie-Antoinette, *Berusaiyu no bara* (Rose of Versailles)<sup>1</sup>. To be restaged almost the same amount of times to sold-out shows, demonstrates that *Erizabēto - ai to shi no rondo* (from here onwards referred to as *Erizabēto*) is of great importance to the company and to its audiences.

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<sup>1</sup> Takarazuka official history page <http://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/history/2005.html> – last accessed 6/1/2015

## Chapter 1

### 1.1 Takarazuka – brief background

The Takarazuka Revue, then Takarazuka Girl's Choir (*Takarazuka Shōkantai*) was established in 1913 by Hankyū railway owner Kobayashi Ichizō (1873 – 1957). This group had its first performance on 1 April, 1914 as a small group of sixteen teenage girls performing Japanese operettas and short musical pieces inspired by Japanese fairy tales.<sup>2</sup> Kobayashi had originally set out to combine Japanese music with Western performance styles, in a new form of performance that would be appealing to a wide range of people; this was his “theatre of the masses” (*kokumin geki*). He felt that Japan needed a new theatre, and attempted to create it.<sup>3</sup> However, Kobayashi also made sure to include *nihonmono* (Japanese-style pieces) with his Westernized performances.<sup>4</sup> Since then, it has come to include in its performances many styles of entertainment, but it has, remained all female. Takarazuka particularly draws on American musicals and the French Revue, to develop a distinct aesthetic characterised by “spellbinding” glamour,<sup>5</sup> “lush”romanticism<sup>6</sup>, and “exhilarating fantasy.”<sup>7</sup> It now adapts plays, operas, musicals, novels, and materials from other genres, both Japanese and Western, but these

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<sup>2</sup>Kobayashi, Ichizō. “Takarazuka oitachi no ki”, from *Takarazuka Manpitsu*, Hankyu Dentetsu 1980 revised edition [http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001256/files/46655\\_29120.html](http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001256/files/46655_29120.html) – last accessed 6/1/2015

<sup>3</sup>Kobayashi cited in Yamanashi, Makiko. *A History of the Takarazuka Revue since 1914 Modernity, Girl's Culture, Japan Pop*, Global Oriental, 2012, p.10

<sup>4</sup>Yamanashi, 2012, p.11

<sup>5</sup>Berlin, Zeke. *Takarazuka: A History and Descriptive Analysis of the All-Female Japanese Performance Company*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1988, p. 24

<sup>6</sup>Berlin, 1988, loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup>Yamanashi, 2012, p.70



are always altered to suit the theatre's established style. They also perform original pieces which are created especially for them by members of their current director group.<sup>8</sup> Takarazuka's interesting blend of Occidentalism and Japanese culture and performance style gained it many fans throughout its history and established it as a theatre in its own right.

Now, with 5 main troupes, over 400 performers, 2 main theatres and yearly country-wide tours Takarazuka is firmly established in the Japanese theatre world. It has in recent years begun to attract attention from English-speaking scholars, many of whom focus on issues of the gender politics, arising from the fact that Takarazuka is an all-female theatre. However it is important to analyse this genre from a performance perspective also, in order to gain a thorough understanding of its performance traditions.

## **1.2 *Elisabeth* – introduction**

The piece chosen for analysis in this thesis is the widely acclaimed musical *Elisabeth* (1992), hailed as the highest grossing German-language musical<sup>9</sup>. *Erizabēto - ai to shi no rondo*, its Takarazuka version, is particularly important to Takarazuka because not only has it become one of its best seller, staple plays which get remade periodically; it also remains the only piece of non-Japanese origin in the Takarazuka repertoire to enjoy such success.

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<sup>8</sup>Berlin, 1988, p.7

<sup>9</sup>Rommel, Birgit., *Aus der "Schwarzen Möwe" wird Elisabeth – Entstehung und Inszenierungsgeschichte des Musicals über die Kaiserin von Österreich*, (From the "Black Seagull" to Elisabeth - Production and Staging History of the musicals about the Empress of Austria) Diplomarbeit, Hamburg, 2007. p. 84

*Elisabeth* is a German-language musical: the collaborative work of composer Sylvester Levay (1945 - ), lyricist-librettist Michael Kunze (1943 - ) and director Harry Kupfer (1935 - ). It was first staged in 1992, in Vienna. The musical is the life story of the last queen of the Habsburg Empire, Elisabeth (1837 – 1898), as told by her assassin, Luigi Lucheni (1873 -1910). It is set in the latter half of the nineteenth century, in Austria and Hungary and portrays the life and death of Elisabeth of Austria (1837 – 1898), the last empress of the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire (1804 – 1867). It is a sombre piece which relates the tragic life of the empress. Elisabeth's fight with her own subconscious, her longing for death and freedom, and the slow but certain loss of everything meaningful to her are all key points in the play which, along with the play's tragic ending, create a narrative and mood that clearly contradicts Takarazuka's usual light performance style. The visual elements of the play (lighting, set, costume) are used to both portray and reinforce the feelings of darkness and oppression communicated by the characters through plot, dialogue and characterisation.

Even at first glance we can see that, in contrast, *Erizabēto - ai to shi no rondo* presents a markedly different approach to this same story: the Japanese version is centered on romance, with the character of Death fighting to gain Elisabeth's love. The visual elements create an atmosphere of richness and romance altogether different to the original. The story communicated through elements of the plot, dialogue and characterisation is centered on Death's suffering at being rejected by Elisabeth, and his efforts to win her heart. Elisabeth is portrayed as being in denial of her feelings for Death, rather than struggling for freedom. The characters and events are softened and shaped to suit Takarazuka's romantic style, and preserve the narrative of the love story.

### 1.3 Methodology

As outlined above, *Elisabeth* is almost the polar opposite of Takarazuka's typical performance style, making it an ideal case study of their adaptation process. My study requires me first to identify Takarazuka's particular aesthetic framework, which will be done in Chapter 3, and then examine what changes were made to the original *Elisabeth* to match this framework, thus giving us insight into Takarazuka's adaptation process and performance traditions. I will be examining two aspects in particular of the adaptation process by which the original musical *Elisabeth* was turned into the Japanese Takarazuka piece *Erizabēto*: 1) storyline themes and characterization (namely through plot, song and dialogue), and 2) physical performance (lighting, wardrobe and scene-setting).

Takarazuka has a strongly visual and sensual style of performance so the visual elements are equally important to the story line as the plot itself. Its style is typically "lavish musical extravaganza"<sup>10</sup>, and "opulent spectacle and dreamy romanticism"<sup>11</sup>. Takarazuka's performance style has developed over the last century, and it heavily borrows from the French revue and other similar performance styles of the early twentieth century, as we will see in the following chapter. Therefore, when adapting shows outside this genre the director has to take into consideration various elements in order to make the work fit Takarazuka's established style. Moreover, they have to also account for the fact that Takarazuka has an all-female cast.

The main themes of the original performance are death, freedom (particularly

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<sup>10</sup>Yamanashi, 2012, p.70

<sup>11</sup>Brau, Lorie. "The women's theatre of Takarazuka", *TDR*, vol. 34, No. 4 (Winter 1990), MIT Press, pp. 79-95, p. 79

the lack thereof), and the futility of fighting one's fate. In the Takazuka version, the addition of "romantic love" as the main theme and the diminishment of the other main themes in favour of "romantic love" is a marked deviation from the original. Through this process of identifying and highlighting those aspects that were specifically inserted, or altered to make *Elisabeth* suitable to Takarazuka we will gain a better understanding of the Takarazuka aesthetics, what it is and how it is performed by examining and contrasting key scenes in *Erizabēto* with their German counterparts.

I will first discuss the musical in terms of pivotal plot points, why they are important, and what effect they have on the portrayal of the characters. The scenes I have chosen for analysis are Act 1 Scenes 2, 3, 4 (3 in the original Viennese), 9 and 10; and Act 2 Scenes 1, 4, 7, 10 and the Epilogue. Scenes 4, and 9 of Act 1 and 1, 4, 7 and the Epilogue of Act 2 play a crucial part in the development of the plot, and the portrayal of the main theme of romantic love in *Erizabēto*, while the remaining scenes are particularly important from a visual perspective. Scenes other than chosen ones will also be referred to in order to have a thorough analysis of the two versions.

I will begin by outlining the original version of *Elisabeth*, to show how the key elements mentioned above interact with each other to create the story, mood and aesthetics of the final product. I will then compare this performance to the first Takarazuka version of *Erizabēto* staged in 1996. *Erizabēto* was staged as follows: *Yuki gumi* (Snow troupe) in 1996, *Hoshi gumi* (Star troupe) in 1997, *Sora gumi* (Cosmos troupe) in 1998, *Hana gumi* (Flower troupe) in 2002, *Tsuki gumi* (Moon troupe) in 2005, *Yuki gumi* (Snow troupe) reprise in 2007, and *Tsuki gumi* (Moon troupe) reprise in 2009<sup>12</sup>, with the latest version performed by *Hana gumi* (Flower Troupe) in 2014.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Official Takarazuka history page <http://kageki.hankyu.co.jp/history/2005.html> - last accessed 6/1/2015

The reason for focusing on the 1996 version is that newer versions were altered and had new songs added, taking *Erizabēto* even further from *Elisabeth* in terms of themes and performance. These new songs and scenes were based on changes made to the original *Elisabeth* in its subsequent performances in Hungary (1996), Essen (2001) and Vienna (2005). Most of the songs used in *Erizabēto*, while respecting the original melody, alter the words in order to reinforce the theme of romantic love that is pivotal to the Takarazuka version. By examining only the first adaptation we can focus on the major changes made to the original to render it suitable for Takarazuka. To look at subsequent versions would not add much to the discussion in terms of material differences between the versions, particularly since the changes largely follow the same patterns of adaptation established in the 1996 version.

Once we have established the general contrast between the story lines in Chapter 4 we will look in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6 at key scenes where the specific two main elements (physical performance, and themes and characterisation) have been altered to better suit Takarazuka, examining the process of alteration and the reasons behind it. As outlined above, there are two main aspects that will be explored in my discussion of the adaptation of *Elisabeth*. The first aspect is thematic and includes characterisation and plot. This can be best seen from Scenes 3, and 9 of Act 1 and 2, 4, 10 and 16 and the Epilogue of Act 2. These scenes are clearly altered from the original to present a different theme of romantic love to the audience; and also, the characters have been similarly altered to fit the standard character archetype typical of a

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<sup>13</sup>*Kumi* is the Japanese word for class. Takarazuka performers are divided into six troupes: *Hana gumi*, *Tsuki gumi*, *Yuki gumi*, *Hoshi gumi*, *Sora gumi* and *Senka* (the Superior Members) whose members are used to augment the other troupes. The reason for using the word *kumi*, which denotes a school setting, will be discussed at length in Chapter 2. For ease the troupes will be referred to by their English names.

Takarazuka performance.

Analysing these scenes in detail and contrasting them with their Takarazuka versions (or, in the case of some of them, discussing their absence from the Takarazuka version) will help give us a clearer idea of the major alterations to the storyline by the Takarazuka directors tasked with the role of creating a story appropriate to the Takarazuka stage. Contrasting scenes 2 and 10 of act 1 and 2 and 6 of act 2 will highlight how the adaptation process altered the physical performance in *Erizabēto*. I will specifically be exploring the changes in costuming and lighting as the main elements of this process I will do this by referring to comments made by directors and scholars who have already discussed these aspects, and I will add my own conclusions arising from the comparison and contrast of the 2 versions. Unless otherwise stated the Japanese translations used here are my own.

The analysis will draw on existing works, both Japanese and Western, which deal with *Elisabeth* and *Erizabēto*, and Takarazuka adaptation, aesthetics and history. These works will be outlined in the literature review. The literature review will also highlight some of the other studies done on Takarazuka, some of which focus on gender issues. These studies were important in helping me form a solid overview of the Takarazuka theatre and its relation to Japanese theatre studies, but they will not feature prominently in my own case study, or study of the adaptation process.

#### **1.4 Literature review**

Before we begin our analysis of the two shows, it is important to establish the theoretical framework on which this analysis is to fit. What follows is a discussion of

selected works on Takarazuka that deal mainly with adaptation and performance. Takarazuka is a relatively new form of Japanese theatre with only a hundred years of history to its name. This, added to the fact that Takarazuka draws considerably on Western performance traditions, may perhaps be reasons for the comparative lack of scholarship in English on it, in comparison to traditional Japanese theatre forms such as Kabuki and Noh, which have attracted more attention from English speaking scholars. It is only in the last decade that an increasing number of English articles and texts on Takarazuka have appeared. Previous to the year 2000 there were only two main English works on Takarazuka, the doctoral thesis of scholar Zeke Berlin (1988), and the book discussing sexual politics within and surrounding the theatre, written by anthropologist Jennifer Robertson (1998). As we will come to see from the following literature review, relatively little work had been done in English on analysing the theatre as a medium of performance; and this thesis aims to focus on, and contribute to, the recent growing discussion on this topic.

This literature review is a discussion of chosen<sup>14</sup> pieces of literature about Takarazuka, focusing on its historical background, development and how it adapts works of non-Japanese origin. To date, most of the English language research gives emphasis to the gender performance aspect to the theatre. Despite this, one particular book, written by theatre scholar Yamanashi Makiko is the only one of its kind (in both English and the Japanese I was able to find) to clearly delineate Takarazuka's aesthetic and discuss it at length. For this reason, I will refer to it often when discussing Takarazuka's performance methods. Some of the arguments related to Takarazuka's

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<sup>14</sup>The pieces were selected based on the relevance to the topic at hand: that is, they were chosen depending on whether they referred to, explained, described or analysed Takarazuka's style of performance

adaptation process referred to in this thesis are from resources written in Japanese by theatre scholars, critics, or essayists. Among the resources written in Japanese there are, of course, also those which echo the Western scholarly interest sexuality and homoeroticism in Takarazuka both as a theatre and as a social mechanism, but for the purpose of my research I will be mainly focusing on the resources that discuss adaptations and performances. Moreover, as the majority of my topic is focused on adaptation in terms of plot, dialogue, set and characterisation, a large portion of the relevant material for the analysis will come from Digital Video Disk (DVD) recordings of *Erizabēto – ai to shi no rondo*. Theatre scholar Marumoto Takashi's chapter<sup>15</sup> "A song for kingdoms: Takarazuka's attempt to adapt the opera *Aida*" (2012) exploring *Aida* and its adaptation to Takarazuka as *A song for kingdoms* is the first work of its kind to be done in English. Marumoto explains that every work that is adapted is "transformed in the context of the Takarazuka revue" and calls this process 'takarazukalization.'<sup>16</sup> He then uses *Aida* as a depiction of how this process functions and in doing so, identifies several key elements. These are: changes in the visual and dramatic style (looking at plot and dialogue), addition of characters to allow for the performers lower in the hierarchy to have a named character,<sup>17</sup> and the rearrangement of the piece so as to have the top star as the centre of the action. Marumoto mentions how one of the steps in the latter process is the changing of the title of the play, and the key alterations of the other characters to make them less ideal than the main character.

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<sup>15</sup>"A song for kingdoms: Takarazuka's attempt to adapt the opera *Aida*", in *Enacting culture –Japanese Theater in historical and modern contexts*, Geilhorn, Barbara; Grossman, Eike; Miura Hiroko; and Eckersall, Peter (eds.), IUDICIUM Verlag, München, 2012, pp. 159 - 171

<sup>16</sup>Marumoto, 2012. p.161

<sup>17</sup>This is not done in every case, nor does it mean, of course, that each of the cast will receive a named role.



Since these alterations are also done to *Elisabeth* to “takarazukalize” it into *Erizabēto - ai to shi no rondo*, it is important to recognise Marumoto’s identification of the adaptation process, and apply it to my own study of *Erizabēto*.

Makiko Yamanashi’s book, *A history of the Takarazuka revue since 1914 – modernity, girls’ culture, Japan pop*<sup>18</sup> (2012) offers a clear history of the theatre, but also analyses it from the perspective of performance with an entire chapter dedicated to Takarazuka’s “fantasy adventure” performance style. The term “fantasy adventure” was created in the early 1970s by the then director of Takarazuka, Kobayashi Kōhei (1928 – 2010, a son-in-law of the founder, Kobayashi Ichizō) and used for the first time to describe the first instalment of *Berusaiyu no bara* (1974, *Rose of Versailles*). It came to refer to Takarazuka’s specific performance style. This term will be discussed at length in Chapter 3. Yamanashi’s work is relevant to my scope, as it clearly identifies the various elements that are involved in the “fantasy adventure”, namely music, performance techniques, and stage sets and costumes. She also establishes key points about the performance style. She writes:

“Takarazuka’s stylistic treatment, ubiquitous sentimental narratives, and its naïve romanticism are seemingly features of outdated melodrama, but they are central to Takarazuka’s dramaturgical ethos that advocates a universal humanity in which love, hope and dreams are eternal.”<sup>19</sup>

Yamanashi explores this “dramaturgical ethos”<sup>20</sup> of Takarazuka, highlighting the elements that underpin the performance of “fantasy adventure”: visual and literary

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<sup>18</sup>Global Oriental, 2012

<sup>19</sup>Yamanashi, 2012, p.208

<sup>20</sup>Yamanashi, 2012, p.105

symbolism and metaphor, the universality of human drama and love, and “intertextural collage”.<sup>21</sup> I will reference these elements defined by Yamanashi in my own analysis of *Erizabēto* in order to show how it was adapted to fit into Takarazuka’s style.

Drama scholar Zeke Berlin’s PhD dissertation<sup>22</sup> *Takarazuka: A History and Descriptive Analysis of the All-Female Japanese Performance Company*, (1988), one of the earliest examples of Takarazuka research in English, focuses mainly on the historical background and development of the theatre, but also pays attention to performances. Berlin’s dissertation provides a solid base for understanding Takarazuka by providing a general description of its performance style, as well as a brief introduction to the company as a business, and to the fans and fan mentality. It also includes detailed descriptions of selected plays such as *Angelique*, *Mon Paris* and *Rose of Versailles* and explanations of the internal hierarchy of Takarazuka: students, directors, choreographers, Board of Directors and how Takarazuka fits within the Hankyū Corporation.<sup>23</sup>

This matter is important to note because it shows Takarazuka to be a theatre as well as a business. Berlin also delves into character performance, discussing use of body language and movement for the conveying of emotions.<sup>24</sup> This was informative for my own study of the various sections of *Elisabeth* and the alterations made to the Takarazuka performance in terms of emotion portrayal and moods. Berlin’s dissertation is a corner stone for Western literature on Takarazuka, and provides a solid introduction

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<sup>21</sup>Yamanashi, 2012, p.110

<sup>22</sup>New York University, 1988

<sup>23</sup>Berlin 1988, p. 251 The Hankyū Railway Corporation or *Hankyū Dentetsu Kabushiki Kaisha* is a Japanese Railway company that operates in the Northern Kansai area of Japan. It is one of the major businesses belonging to Hankyu Hanshin Holdings Inc. It was established in 1907 by Kobayashi Ichizō who later founded the Takarazuka Revue.

<sup>24</sup>Berlin 1988, p.19

to Takarazuka as a theatre. However, due to the sheer breadth of the topic I shall be focusing mainly on the parts of his work that discuss performance and adaptation (including translation).

In his book *Erizabēto – dokuhon, Wīn kara Nihon e*<sup>25</sup> (*Elisabeth: a guidebook from Vienna to Japan*) Japanese theatre scholar Watanabe Ryō contrasts the 1992, 2001 and 2003 versions of the German-language *Elisabeth* with the Takarazuka repeat seasons of 1997, 1998, 2002 and 2007. He illustrates the changes the show has undergone over these years, although not analysing it specifically from an adaptation perspective, rather, offering a contrast between the versions. The book focuses on joining historical facts about the Empress' life with their altered counterparts from the 1992 version, showing how key historical facts were incorporated into the drama. He gives a scene-by-scene account of the original German-language version, which, in the absence of video material of that performance, has been vital to my own understanding of the performance.

Watanabe also explores the changes between the subsequent German-language versions, and Takarazuka versions, and discusses the Japanese language adaptations of this German story done by the Tōhō theatre company.<sup>26</sup> Although he analyses both *Elisabeth* and *Erizabēto*, he does so more in terms of the musical numbers and plot alterations, only briefly touching on actual staging and performance. He also looks at the subtle differences between subsequent Takarazuka versions, but does not refer to Takarazuka's own intrinsic performance style and aesthetics. This book has proven extremely valuable to my own research, particularly in the scene comparison

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<sup>25</sup>Seikyusha, 2010

<sup>26</sup>The Tōhō theatre company is another theatre company belonging to Hankyū. It employs both male and female performers.

aspect, by allowing me to verify my own conclusions of what was changed, and why.

As mentioned already, Takarazuka has been the subject of much Western scholarly research from the perspective of gender politics: considerably more than from the perspective of performance. Theatre scholar Helen Parker's chapter on *otokoyaku*, entitled *The Men of Our Dreams: The Role of the Otokoyaku in the Takarazuka Revue Company's "Fantasy Adventure"* (2001)<sup>27</sup> begins to fill this gap by looking at chosen Takarazuka plays mainly from a performance aspect. She discusses the aesthetics of the *otokoyaku*, how they are presented as the epitome of the ideal man, and how this aesthetic is achieved with plot, dialogue and gender performance. She establishes that (for example in the play *La Jeunesse*, 1996) love for the main character and a sensitivity where other characters' feelings are concerned create a sense of the ideal man. She notes that throughout the duration of the play the *otokoyaku* is not perceived as a woman playing a man, but a man:

“Although her crossdressing and assumption of certain masculine behaviour may not entirely cancel out her female gender, for the duration of the performance she is accepted as male, and does not signify a woman playing a man.”<sup>28</sup>

Parker's article lays down a solid foundation for a more in-depth analysis of different plays, by exploring the role of the *otokoyaku* in the context of the performance.

Theatre scholar Jane Singer's article *The Dream World of Takarazuka* - 1996<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Parker, Helen S.E. 'The Men of Our Dreams: The Role of the *Otokoyaku* in the Takarazuka Revue Company's "Fantasy Adventure",' *Japanese Theatre and International Stage*, Stanca Scholz-Cionca and Samuel L. Leiter (eds), Brill, 2001, pp.242 – 254.

<sup>28</sup> Parker 2000, p.245

<sup>29</sup> *Japan Quarterly*, 43 (2), 1996, pp.162-181

also discusses aspects of performance and offers a solid introduction to Takarazuka and its fans. Filled with vivid descriptions of on-stage scenes on the one hand, and interviews with people involved in the theatre on the other, it gives the reader a more complete approach to this form of theatre. Singer's article provided important information regarding performance in Takarazuka, specifically focusing on the *otokoyaku*. She acknowledges the exaggerated style of acting, which she describes as "intentionally artificial" and differentiates from the Western style of acting. This is important to note because exaggeration plays a crucial role in creating the "dream world" that is constantly advertised by the company. The "dream world" concept is agreed upon by many of the sources as an inherent aspect of the theatre.<sup>30</sup>

Theatre scholars Karen Nakamura and Hisako Matsuo's chapter "Female masculinity and fantasy spaces: transcending genders in the Takarazuka theatre and Japanese popular cultures"<sup>31</sup> (2003) discusses the role of the *otokoyaku* in Takarazuka as well as in *shōjo* ([young] girl) culture, and *manga* (comics). Their argument is that these mediums create a fantasy space which allows the viewers or readers respite from the restrictive gender roles imposed upon them by society.<sup>32</sup> Their discussion of the theatre, and the comments from directors and playwrights on the performance style were key in establishing that Takarazuka has a style unique that the company's directors are aware of and specifically cater to.<sup>33</sup>

While the aforementioned works by Parker and Singer do discuss adaptations

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<sup>30</sup>Stickland 2008, pp.137, 222; Berlin, 1988, p.310; Parker, 2000, p.241

<sup>31</sup>*Men and masculinities in contemporary Japan: dislocating the salaryman doxa*, Roberson, James and Suzuki, Nobue (eds.) Routledge Curzon 2003. pp.128-163

<sup>32</sup>Nakamura and Matsuo, 2003, p.129

<sup>33</sup>Nakamura and Matsuo, 2003, p.143

by Takarazuka of works outside its repertoire and changes they incur to make them suitable for their debut on the Takarazuka stage, they do so briefly without analysing in detail their chosen pieces. Berlin is more thorough; however, his dissertation only refers to three plays, only the first of which includes a detailed plot description. Further, his thesis was written before the performance of *Elisabeth* and as such does not evaluate its adaptation. However, his thesis was useful in establishing the basic necessary information about Takarazuka as a theatre. Building upon this, Parker's analysis was particularly useful to me in the formulation of my own ideas and research questions.

The German-language analytical account of *Elisabeth*, by German theatre scholar Birgit Rommel<sup>34</sup>, *Aus der "Schwarzen Möwe" wird Elisabeth – Entstehung und Inszenierungsgeschichte des Musicals über die Kaiserin von Österreich* (From the "Black Seagull" to Elisabeth - Production and Staging History of the musicals about the Empress of Austria) (2007), first analyses the different types of modern theatre, in order to establish what kind of show *Elisabeth* is. Rommel analyses the libretto of the original *Elisabeth* (1992) as a means to better understand the performance, and briefly compares it to its Takarazuka counterparts (up to the 2002 *Hana gumi* version). This helps create a solid base for her analysis by first explaining the historical and cultural background of the show, including a brief discussion on director Michael Kunze's inspiration and intentions for the piece. Furthermore, her analysis of *Elisabeth* puts into perspective the different performance techniques, themes and also staging techniques, allowing us to see how they individually contribute to the final effect. While descriptive, Rommel's work does not specifically mention aesthetics and focuses mainly on direct contrast

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<sup>34</sup>Rommel, Birgit., *Aus der "Schwarzen Möwe" wird Elisabeth – Entstehung und Inszenierungsgeschichte des Musicals über die Kaiserin von Österreich*, (From the "Black Seagull" to Elisabeth - Production and Staging History of the Musicals about the Empress of Austria) Diplomarbeit, Hamburg, 2007.

between the versions of *Elisabeth* and *Erizabēto*. My work uses Rommel's descriptions, alongside my own analysis to draw conclusions about Takarazuka's performance style and aesthetics.

Because the Japanese literature on Takarazuka is so vast I have mainly focussed on works that deal with *Erizabēto* as an adaptation. There are many books discussing Takarazuka in Japanese. Often they are written by fans, for fans, so the focus is on individual stars, or anecdotal elements. There are also memoirs written by the stars themselves, which, while important in providing an insider's view of Takarazuka, are nevertheless aimed to be consumed by fans, and so are largely not relevant in the case at hand. The publications I have used deal specifically with *Erizabēto* as an adaptation, or, alternatively, discuss Takarazuka's performance style or history. I have referred briefly to Hankyū-published Takarazuka magazines or programs for their interviews with the directors, allowing me an insight into the adaptation process from the perspective of the people involved directly in adapting.

Takarazuka is noticeably popular with women, owing to a range of factors, both socio-economic and circumstantial. As theatre scholar Leonie R. Stickland explains in her book *Takarazuka Gender Gymnastics: performing and consuming Japan's Takarazuka Revue* (2008), the system of advance reservation (which often involves queuing), and the shows being mostly during work hours on weekdays, disadvantages those with full time jobs, more of whom tend to be men.<sup>35</sup> The position of the theatre, in non-metropolitan Takarazuka also plays a part in this, making it difficult for those working full-time to be able to reach the theatre, even in the event that

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<sup>35</sup>Stickland, Leonie R. *Takarazuka Gender Gymnastics: performing and consuming Japan's Takarazuka Revue*, Trans Pacific Press 2008, p.145

it would do late night shows. One must also consider that it is no longer required that a woman be assisted by a man, or considered improper for a woman to attend the theatre alone, as it was in the first twenty years of the Revue's existence.<sup>36</sup> These factors are major influences on the aesthetics and style of the theatre which caters to this mainly female audience.<sup>37</sup> The aesthetics and style of the theatre, the fact that the audience mainly consists of women, alongside the all-female aspect, has raised many questions (in both Japan and in English-speaking countries) about the sexual politics surrounding the theatre and its audiences.

This matter of sexual politics is of less relevance to the development of my study, but the four main arguments for Takarazuka's attraction to its mainly female<sup>38</sup> audience will be summarised in the following paragraphs. In recognition of the considerable attention given to this issue in Western academia, I will also briefly outline some of the gender politics aspects of Takarazuka. These are important for the light they shed on performance dynamics and the expectations of the audience. The main issue is the role of the *otokoyaku*, which raises several questions about the gender politics of the theatre. Although physically women, the *otokoyaku* strive to emulate masculine ideals, which for many scholars begs the question: does the audience yearn for (*akogare*) the "man" or the woman underneath the make-up? In reply to this, theatre scholar Makiko Yamanashi criticizes anthropologist Jennifer Robertson for her reductionist approach to Takarazuka, and her argument that Takarazuka's popularity is best understood in the

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<sup>36</sup>Stickland 2008 p.149

<sup>37</sup>Although, not necessarily an equally female-dominated fan-base, thanks to the Takarazuka television channel, Sky Stage, DVDs and video tapes, and the Internet, which allow people to become fans even if they cannot physically attend shows.

<sup>38</sup>Although less drastic now than Berlin pictures it in his thesis, at 99.1% women fans among a group of 527 people (see Berlin 1988, p. 314); it is nevertheless overwhelmingly female.



context of lesbianism.<sup>39</sup> She also disagrees with Stickland's approach, suggesting that, similar to Robertson, it does not examine the basic premise that Takarazuka is a stage performance. Yamanashi, herself, approaches Takarazuka from a historical perspective but also analyses the theatre's approach to performance, creating a more balanced image of the theatre as a performance medium.

Jennifer Robertson focuses on the "erotic aesthetic" that arises from all the performers being female, between them and the fans, particularly the male fans.<sup>40</sup> She suggests that the "erotic aesthetic" works in conjunction with the attraction that arises from looking at a woman living in both worlds, both as a female and a male at the same time. Robertson provides detailed background information on Takarazuka in her book. The scope of the book being, as the title suggests, sexual politics in relation to Takarazuka, and much of the text is devoted to discussing this. The conclusion Robertson draws is that the theatre being all female, the enjoyment of the theatre, done by the mostly female fans, relies on sexual desire as 'unaligned erotic play' arising from the fact that the *otokoyaku* are women.<sup>41</sup>

The other explanation she offers is that the *otokoyaku* being able to navigate both genders successfully allows the audience respite from the social limitations placed on their gender and gives them the possibility to vicariously enjoy freedom from such limitations.<sup>42</sup> She furthermore alleges that fans view the *otokoyaku* as a "style-setting

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<sup>39</sup>Yamanashi, Makiko. *A history of the Takarazuka Revue since 1914: modernity, girl's culture, Japan pop*, Global Oriental 2012, xxiii

<sup>40</sup>Robertson, Jennifer, *Takarazuka sexual politics and popular culture in modern Japan*, University of California Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> printing with corrections, 2001, p.197

<sup>41</sup>Robertson 2001, p.145

<sup>42</sup>Robertson 2001, p.85

lesbian”.<sup>43</sup> What this does essentially is to unnecessarily sexualise the theatre while completely bypassing the fact that Takarazuka is above all a performance medium and, as such, sexual politics must be read in the context of performing. Little attention is paid to shows outside of discussions of gender performance, which, I would suggest, creates a skewed image of the theatre.

The second argument for Takarazuka’s popularity is the antithesis of the first and suggests that Takarazuka is anything but sexual and its popularity resides purely in the dream-like quality of its performances. This is explained as follows by Takarazuka playwright Ogita Kōichi (translation by Nakamura and Matsuo):

“There are those who, looking at Takarazuka from the outside, try to understand it in terms of sexuality. That is not enough. Analyzing only the raw bodies (*namami* [the physicality]) of Takarazuka will lead you to ignore a completely different dimension of the Theatre -- that Takarazuka is ultimately a fantasy, a fictional creation [...] the *otoko-yaku* are... not men. The same goes for the *onna-yaku* (female-roles) -- both the *otoko-yaku* and the *onna-yaku* are constructs that exist within a particular fantasy [or fictional space].”<sup>44</sup>

The third argument, suggested by Stickland in both her book and her doctorate thesis<sup>45</sup>, is a balance between the first two. She writes:

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<sup>43</sup>Robertson 2001, p.86

<sup>44</sup>Nakamura and Matsuo 2003, p.136

<sup>45</sup>Stickland, 2008, p.66; Stickland, Leonie R. *Gender gymnastics: performers, fans and gender issues in the Takarazuka Revue of contemporary Japan*, Ph.D. dissertation, Murdoch University, 2004, p.63. from <http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/349/> last accessed 6/1/2015.

“Fundamentally, however, I believe that the appeal of Takarazuka cannot be expressed in precise terms. It certainly involves erotic sexuality and sexual desire for some who attend its performances and worship its performers, but it represents another kind of ‘love’ and enjoyment for others, who appreciate the skill and beauty of cast members in their portrayal of gender, and the entire fantasy world their characters inhabit.”<sup>46</sup>

The fourth view is expressed by theatre professor Erica Stevens Abbitt in “Androgyny and otherness: exploring the West through the Japanese performative body” (2001), where she analyses the popular Takarazuka show *Berusaiyu no bara* (1974, *Rose of Versailles*). The show centres on the life of Oscar François de Jarjeyes, a woman raised from birth as a boy, who becomes part of the personal guard of Queen Marie-Antoinette (1755 -1793). Oscar becomes head of the guards, and then quits in order to fight in the French revolution, on the side of the peasantry. Although we can see her encounters with the divisive gender norms of the time, her upbringing allows her to bypass them and enjoy the same freedoms as other men. Abbitt notes that Robertson attributes the popularity of roles akin to Lady Oscar to lesbian subtext without exploring the theatrical concept of “slippage”. This term refers to the gap between reality and appearances where sex and gender are concerned. “Slippage” has been a basic aspect of theatre in both the East and the West for hundreds of years. Abbitt argues that the *otokoyaku* is not intended to be taken as a man at all, rather it is a character specifically designed to be enjoyed as a woman:

“Perhaps the popularity of *The Rose of Versailles* depends less on

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<sup>46</sup>Stickland 2008, p.7

a lesbian aesthetic than on the subversive pleasure (sic) Lady Oscar gives female audience members as they witness a woman getting away with a male performance of power and freedom.”<sup>47</sup>

It is important to mention that Abbitt only discusses the main character of *The Rose of Versailles* for her analysis, and does not look at the theatre as a whole. Nevertheless, I have included it here as an alternative point of view because it is the only article discussing Takarazuka’s appeal from an alternating gender perspective, not attributing it to sexuality, but rather as an escape from the restraints society places on women.

The recent literature in English on Takarazuka shows that a dialogue on Takarazuka’s performance practices has begun. Using the framework set out by Yamanashi and Takahashi above, this thesis will build on the concept of Takarazuka’s performance style, and examine its aesthetics. The analysis of *Elisabeth* and *Erizabēto* would not be complete without Watanabe, Amano and Rommel’s contributions to the discussion. Stickland, Nakamura and Matsuo, Robertson and Abbitt’s research was particularly crucial to my understanding of gender as it is performed by the *otokoyaku* and the *musumeyaku*.

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<sup>47</sup>Abbitt, Erica S., “Androgyny and Otherness: Exploring the West Through the Japanese Performative Body”, *Asian Theatre Journal* , Vol. 18, No. 2 (Autumn, 2001), p.252.

## Chapter 2

### 2.1 Early beginnings of the Takarazuka Revue

Aforementioned Kobayashi Ichizō, founder of the the Takarazuka Revue was the executive chief of the Minō Arima Electric Railways (*Minō Arima Dentetsu*, now Hankyū Railways – *Hankyū Dentetsu*). The name Takarazuka comes from the place where the theatre was established, a small town in the Hyōgo prefecture of Japan, and the terminus of the Minō Arima Electric Railways' Osaka line.

In 1911 Kobayashi had opened in the small town of Takarazuka a spa resort in the hope that it would attract clients there. The spa was named “Paradise” and was intended to give its customers a semi-rural natural haven<sup>48</sup> from the polluted metropolitan areas. The venture, however, was a failure<sup>49</sup> and Kobayashi was forced to find another way of attracting the public to the area, and therefore travelling on his railway line. He was inspired by the Mitsukoshi Department store in Tokyo, where one of his acquaintances had created a boys' musical band (in 1910) to attract potential customers, which proved especially popular with women and children.<sup>50</sup> In 1912 Kobayashi gathered sixteen young girls between the ages of thirteen and fifteen under

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<sup>48</sup>Stickland 2008, p.21

<sup>49</sup>Although the style of the building was very ornate and modern, there was no heating system so the water was cold. Furthermore, the moral code of the time did not allow women and men to swim together, even in swimming suits, so they had to switch the use of the pool between women and men every hour. This made the enterprise “impractical”, and “uneconomical”, which led to its closure. – see Yamanashi, 2012, pp. 6-7, Stickland, 2008, p.20

<sup>50</sup>Stickland 2008, p.22

the *kazoedoshi*<sup>51</sup> system of counting and named the group *Takarazuka Shōkantai* (The Takarazuka Choir).<sup>52</sup> In December 1913 he added four more girls to the group and gave it the name *Takarazuka Shōjo Kageki Yoseikai* (The Takarazuka Girl's Opera Training Association).<sup>53</sup>

The first Takarazuka prototype performance took place on 1 April 1914 in Kobayashi's "Paradise" spa resort, where one of the pools had been boarded over and converted into a stage. The programme was described as a mix of dance and musical items, or *otogi kageki* (fairy-tale opera).<sup>54</sup> In contrast to the boys' band of Mitsukoshi Department Store, Kobayashi chose to create a women-only choir for two reasons: they were cheaper to hire and he subscribed to the stereotyped view of the time that although only men could specialise in any given field, women were quicker learners at an amateur level, so they would be ready for a performance after minimal training.<sup>55</sup> Takarazuka was advertised in the newspaper as "the first girls' opera in Japan...gorgeous and exciting musical".

At the time when the Takarazuka Choir was formed, women were only just beginning to return to professional acting after an absence of nearly three hundred years (since the ban on female Kabuki performers in 1629).<sup>56</sup> There was still much prejudice

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<sup>51</sup>The *kazoedoshi* system counts the first year of life as 1 instead of 0. Essentially this made the girls twelve to fourteen years of age under the Western counting system.

<sup>52</sup>Kobayashi, Ichizō. "Takarazuka oitachi no ki" (Chronicles of Takarazuka's development), in *Takarazuka Manpitsu* (Takarazuka jottings), Hankyu Dentetsu, 1980 – from [http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001256/files/46655\\_29120.html](http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001256/files/46655_29120.html) —last accessed 6/1/2015

<sup>53</sup>Stickland 2004, p.63

<sup>54</sup>Stickland 2004, p.65

<sup>55</sup>Stickland 2004, p.22; Kobayashi 1955, p.447

<sup>56</sup>Kabuki is a form of traditional Japanese theatre that began around 1603. The person credited with first performing in this style is Izumo no Okuni (1572? -?), a former *miko* (shrine maiden). It was originally

held towards women who performed because of the direct connection that there had been in the past between some types of women's stage performances and prostitution. Another reason was the fact that since the official return of women to the stage through *shinpa* (lit. 'new wave' theatre) from 1888 and *shingeki* (lit. 'new theatre'), from 1906, some actresses not only portrayed women at odds with the mores of the society at the time, but also lived in defiance of them.<sup>57</sup> Possibly the most famous and extreme example of actresses not just performing, but defying the social rules of the time is Matsui Sumako (1886-1919). She became known for playing the infamous character of Nora (who abandons her home and family, in order to live as herself) in the 1914 Japanese adaptation of Henry Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*. Later she caused a furore when she left her husband for another man, then committed suicide when her lover died. Matsui's case cemented the view of many Japanese that professional acting was a scandalous career for women.

This general attitude towards female performers explains why originally Kobayashi insisted that the Takarazuka performers were not actresses, but singers, and represented them as amateurs rather than professionals who could be associated with the

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performed only by women. This new style of theatre combined folk dances, with song and acting, which had not been done before. It employed cross-dressing and sexually-suggestive themes. Many of its performers were prostitutes and this led to post-show fights among male viewers, over who would enjoy which actress' favours. The Tokugawa shogunate (1603-1868) banned women from performing Kabuki in an attempt to stop this from happening. This lack of actresses created a gap in what Kabuki could offer, which led to the development of the *onnagata* (the female role specialists), men who specialised in performing their interpretation of stereotypical femininity.

<sup>57</sup>One of the first female stage performers of the new era, and the first woman to officially be called an "actress" (*joyū*), Kawakami Sadayakko (1871 – 1946), was a former geisha. She went on to found the first training centre for actresses in 1908. This became the Imperial Actress Training Institution (*Teikoku joyū yōseijo*) in 1909.

improper and widely-held negative image of female performers at the time. Kobayashi was a believer in the traditional role of women, and Takarazuka was intended to be a means for girls who wanted to perform to do so without damaging their chances of getting married, or tarnishing the reputation of their families.<sup>58</sup>

The role of women in society at this time was still governed by the *Good Wife Wise Mother* (*ryōsai kenbo*) model of femininity; a concept introduced by the Meiji Civil Code in 1898, and which was widely promoted in society until 1947.<sup>59</sup> Secondary schools for girls were intended (as they had been since 1888) to teach the students how to become wives and mothers, rather than provide much academic training. Furthermore the schools were aimed primarily at girls from the middle and upper-middle classes.<sup>60</sup> Girls from smaller towns or rural areas, from poor and working class backgrounds, clearly were not included in this vision. In complete contrast to the *Good Wife Wise Mother* image, often prostitution was inevitable for many such girls and they were frequently sold into brothels by their parents.<sup>61</sup> Kobayashi was aware of this situation and insisted on recruiting only girls from financially well-off families, to quash any suspicions of their being 'bought.'<sup>62</sup>

Kobayashi was also aware of the shady reputation and links to prostitution of the old Takarazuka spa near his own one and he was trying to distinguish his own business from it to lessen the fears of the girls' parents that his opera group was only a front for

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<sup>58</sup>Stickland 2004, p.53

<sup>59</sup>Robertson 2001, p.14

<sup>60</sup>Nakajima, Sachiko and Liddle, Joanna. *Rising suns rising daughters: gender, class and power in Japan*, Zed books, 2001, p.52

<sup>61</sup>op cit, p.69

<sup>62</sup>Stickland 2004, p.70



licensed prostitution.<sup>63</sup> Kobayashi managed to do so by recruiting girls from well-off families (*ryōke*) and ensuring that his performers were being trained in accordance with the *Good Wife Wise Mother* ideology, in a very strict and morally clean environment, with constant supervision.<sup>64</sup> As discussed earlier, he also presented the group as amateurs, insisting that its aim was not to create professional artists but rather to give access to higher education to the mothers of Japan's future generations.<sup>65</sup> Originally there was no mandatory retirement age and the actresses could continue performing as long as they remained unmarried. Some of them chose to stay on beyond the age of thirty, forty, or even fifty and sixty.<sup>66</sup> The current age limit is sixty years, however many actresses choose to retire earlier, while still at the peak of their performing abilities.<sup>67</sup> They are not, however, forced to do so; and some continue performing well into their forties. Of the actresses who retire, while some do marry upon their retirement, many continue their careers outside of Takarazuka as performers.<sup>68</sup>

Takarazuka was thus exemplary in its early years because it gave women financial independence at a time where women were expected to be financially dependent on men. It is also important to note that irrespective of Kobayashi's original

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<sup>63</sup>op cit, p.22

<sup>64</sup>Robertson 2001, p.8

<sup>65</sup>Stickland 2008, p.26

<sup>66</sup>For example Amatsu Otome (1905 -1980), who continued performing until her death and Kasugano Yachiyo (1915 – 2012), who was an active member at the time of her passing.

<sup>67</sup>Stickland 2008, p.179

<sup>68</sup>Wao Yōka, a former top-star, received the leading role in *Cha-cha: Tengai no Onna* (Cha-cha: the woman of heaven) almost immediately upon her retirement in July of 2006. This role won her the Best Actress award at the Osaka Cinema Festival 2007. Many Takarazuka performers also continue to perform special concerts within the company upon their retirement as OGs ('old girls'), the Japanese term for "alumni."

intentions, Takarazuka created an alternative to the traditional path of marrying early and having children.

Kobayashi wanted to create a new theatre that would appeal to the masses, and also represent Japan to the world, and Takarazuka became his lifelong project. He felt that Kabuki was an outdated form of theatre which no longer served as a form of entertainment readily and easily available<sup>69</sup> because tickets were hard to attain and expensive. He wanted his opera troupe to be easily-accessible<sup>70</sup> modern entertainment for the whole family and to become the new Kabuki for Japan, so, even though he presented it as “amateurish”, (i.e not professional) he was in fact preparing a polished theatre. We can see his intention to create a professional theatre by looking at his choice in co-workers for Takarazuka. Kobayashi initially enlisted the help of composer and opera singer Andō Hiroshi (1883 – 1967), whom he calls a “genius” (*tensaiteki*).<sup>71</sup> A piano teacher and two choreographers were added in 1913. The girls were then prepared for nine months before their first performance in April 1914. This again seems in direct contradiction to the ostensibly amateur nature of the theatre, since such an amount of time is considerably long as preparation for an “amateurish” performance.

As mentioned already, the first performances of the (then) Takarazuka Opera Training Company were Japanese fairy-tale operettas (*otogi kageki*). They took place on a make-shift stage at Kobayashi’s spa, *Paradise*. It was split into three parts: an opera *Donburako* (based on the folk tale *Momotarō*, [Peach Boy]); a comedy opera *Ukare Daruma* (The High-Spirited Daruma Doll); and a Japanese style dance entitled *Kochō*

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<sup>69</sup>Kobayashi, I. 1955, pp.113-117 quoted in Yamanashi 2012, p.10

<sup>70</sup>Berlin 1988, p.125

<sup>71</sup>Kobayashi [1980, p.4](#)

(Butterfly),<sup>72</sup> arranged for them by Andō. The show lasted for a total of 30 minutes and was restaged 3 to 5 times a day depending on the demand.<sup>73</sup>

Success was not immediate, although the response was positive enough to allow performances to continue. For the first few years audiences were relatively small despite there being no admission fee; however, Kobayashi persisted. Performances were not scheduled, and would only happen when enough seats were filled. Despite this, planning for a new performance began almost immediately, and in August of the first year *Urashima Tarō* (The Tale of Urashima Tarō) was staged together with *Kokyō no Sora* (Native Sky). Andō wrote these pieces in the *otogi kageki* style that was to become the style of early Takarazuka. Yet another programme was scheduled for November and December of 1914.

Beginning in 1915, for the following six years Takarazuka would stage a new performance every three months. The number of performances was increased in 1921 and by 1922 demand had increased enough to warrant new performances every month.<sup>74</sup> Andō composed all the music for the programmes in the first years. He referenced German and Italian sources which attracted many trained musicians who were eager to perform Western-style music: a rare opportunity at that time in Japan. These were the first instances of non-Japanese materials being adapted to the Takarazuka stage.

In January of 1920 ten boys were admitted to the Takarazuka Music School as

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<sup>72</sup>Berlin 1988, p.70

<sup>73</sup>Shimizu, Reiko. “Takarazuka Kageidan no [sakuhin to ongaku]” ( The music and works of the Takarazuka Revue), in *Takarazuka Kageidan Sutadīzu – Butai wo 100 bai tanoshimu chiteki na 15 kōza* (Takarazuka Revue Studies – 15 intellectual lectures to enjoy the stage 100 times more), Shigehiro Etō, Tomoko Ueki, Akiko Katō, Reiko Shimizu, and Kaoru Hyūga (eds.), Ebisu Kosyo Publication, Tokyo, 2007, p.83

<sup>74</sup>Berlin 1988, p.81

part of a special performing group (*senka*) intended to be tutored by Tsubouchi Shikō (1887 – 1986), who had joined the company in the same year. He had studied at both Waseda and Harvard Universities, as well as lived in Europe (specifically England) for four years before beginning to work for Takarazuka and had also performed the title role in *Hamlet* in 1918 at the Imperial Theatre.<sup>75</sup> His arrival into the company was intended to help move the style of performances closer to opera. Six months later the school admitted an extra twenty boys to join the four-year long *senka* course. However, vehement opposition from both the female students and their families, especially the latter, led to the abrupt cancellation of the course in November of the same year.<sup>76</sup>

From as early as 1913 Andō had debated with Kobayashi and insisted on adding male performers to the troupe and increasing the age-range (previously only girls under the age of fifteen had been allowed to enter), to allow for a greater range of performance materials, that is, to allow for performing more than just childish, school-play style *otogi kageki*. Andō was also adamant that Takarazuka could not establish itself as a real theatre without including male performers, since it was limited in terms of what it could perform. Kobayashi resisted, fearing that adding boys would destroy the moral standards that they had managed to establish and cause a backlash. The response from the attempt to introduce boys to the troupe confirmed this and on-going disagreements on the topic prompted Andō to quit in 1922.

Takarazuka had developed a reputation of being light entertainment presented by young girls; however, in the background new choreographers, directors and

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<sup>75</sup>He was the son of Shakespeare translator and *shingeki* pioneer Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859 – 1935).

Literally meaning “new drama”, *shingeki* refers to the Japanese interpretation of Western realist theatre of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>76</sup>Stickland 2004, p.79

composers were added each year. Among these was director/writer Hisamatsu Issei (1874 - 1943). Hisamatsu influenced the practices of the performers, teaching discipline and professionalism. It was he who ended, for example, impromptu stage departures that had plagued some performances due to the inexperience and young-age of the performers.

In 1919 Kobayashi brought Kishida Tatsuya (1892-1944) onto the Board of Directors. Kishida was one of the driving forces behind the style development where his expertise in and experience with Western opera, as well as his sense of discipline, remodelled Takarazuka into a professional theatre.<sup>77</sup> He was renowned for being a “severe task-master and serious disciplinarian”.<sup>78</sup> As his assistant he enlisted the help of Shirai Tetsuzō (1900 – 1983), a member of Takarazuka’s own ill-fated *senka* group, who later came to be known as the “King of Revues” for his contributions, and continued to write for Takarazuka until his death in 1983.<sup>79</sup> Shirai, for example, composed the choreography for the wildly popular *Mon Paris* (My Paris, 1927), and directed shows such as *Parisette* (1930), and *Hana Shishū* (Flower Anthology, 1933), as well as introducing the first *ippon date* (lit. “stand alone” play; ie a play in two acts, without a revue): *Gu Bijin* (Yu, The Beautiful, 1951) and *Genji Monogatari* (The Tale of Genji, 1952) Tsubouchi tried to introduce more mature materials, doing an adaptation of the French show *The Dumb Wife*, renamed as *Oshi Nyōbo* in 1921. This play was about a man whose mute wife is cured and becomes too verbose. The man decides to make himself deaf to escape her talking. The play ends with everyone going mad and bursting

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<sup>77</sup>The ‘amateur’ and ‘school’ nomenclature associated with Takarazuka remained in spite of this clear shift into performance professionalism. The discussion of this decision will be covered later on.

<sup>78</sup>Berlin 1988, p.76

<sup>79</sup>Stickland 2004, p.81

into song. Despite the rather dark and disturbing ending, the play was very well received, which can be interpreted as an indication that audiences were ready for more mature topics.

In 1921 the existing performers were divided into two troupes (*kumi*)<sup>80</sup> to allow for an increase in the demand for performances. The two troupes could perform at different venues simultaneously, thereby making Takarazuka more widely available. Kobayashi called the troupes *kumi* in keeping with the school image he had crafted. This image continues to the present day: actresses are referred to as *seito* (student), rehearsal rooms are called *kyōshitsu* (classrooms), and supervisors are called *sensei* (teacher). The actresses are said to “graduate” (*sotsugyō suru*) upon their retirement, still respecting the jargon that Kobayashi introduced in the early years of the theatre.<sup>81</sup>

In April 1926 Kobayashi established the *Kokuminza*, or National Drama Company, in his continued effort to create a theatre which would introduce opera to Japan. He set-up a small scale theatre specifically for this troupe and in 1928 the troupe performed *En no Gyōja* (The Ascetic of the En Clan), a show based on the original script by renowned playwright and theatre scholar of the time Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859 – 1935). Kobayashi employed both male and female performers and it seems that he intended for Takarazuka to become a secondary venture<sup>82</sup>, perhaps because he held the traditional view that women belonged in the home as wives and mothers. However the

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<sup>80</sup>The names of the original troupes were *Hana gumi* (Flower Troupe) and *Tsuki gumi* (Moon Troupe). These names and their English translations are still used at present; however, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the number of troupes has increased to 6 (although only 5 perform, with the members of the 6<sup>th</sup> troupe occasionally being given roles in the other troupes).

<sup>81</sup>Stickland 2008, p.22

<sup>82</sup>Berlin 1988, p.89

public response was very weak and after five years the company was disbanded.<sup>83</sup>

Kobayashi realised from the failure of his Kokuminza theatre that radical changes would be needed in order for Takarazuka to become the national theatre of Japan that he hoped for. In 1925 he arranged for director Kishida Tatsuya to travel to America and Europe in the hope of finding new styles of performance that could be adapted to Takarazuka. The French Revue seemed to Kishida to be the most suitable for Takarazuka, perhaps because it also consisted in large of female performers. Upon his return Kishida endeavoured to convince the Takarazuka Board of Directors to let him stage a similar Revue-inspired show. The budget he needed was four times the previous annual production amount so there was staunch opposition from the other board members. However, Kobayashi decided to take a risk and overruled the Board, allowing Kishida to create the show.<sup>84</sup>

The show, *Mon Paris*, presented sixteen different scenes in rapid succession and lasted one and a half hours. The story followed a couple on their honeymoon travelling through exotic places such as India and Egypt and ending in Paris. The stage settings were lavish and decorative, more so than they had previously been, to account for the glitz and glamour of the different exotic settings. A fifteen-step staircase, inspired by the Jessnertreppen<sup>85</sup> used in European shows, was used for the finale, and it proved so popular that the staircase has since become a fixture of Takarazuka.<sup>86</sup> Another key element of Takarazuka which dates back to *Mon Paris* is the high-kick

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<sup>83</sup>loc.cit

<sup>84</sup>Berlin 1988, p. 90

<sup>85</sup>Jessnertreppen is a staircase used often in European shows during the twenties. It was named after director Leopold Jessner (1878 -1945) who was renowned for working with bare stages with flights of steps used as platforms for different action, instead of scene changes.

<sup>86</sup>Berlin 1988, p. 98

dance, known in Japan as a “line dance”. This was the first time a chorus line had been used on the Japanese stage and it proved immensely popular. *Mon Paris* opened on 1 September 1927 as a performance of the Flower troupe.<sup>87</sup> If we recall the short, simple *otogi kageki* pieces that Takarazuka began with, one can imagine how a 90-minute, highly choreographed show with sixteen different scenes would impress, and invite larger audiences.

*Mon Paris*, was also the start of the traditions of romanticism, exoticism as part of “fantasy adventure”, although this specific term would not appear until the early 1970s. *Mon Paris* was also the starting point in the existence of specialised *otokoyaku* roles.<sup>88</sup> Until then the students had taken turns playing male and female roles. With the development of specific *otokoyaku*, Takarazuka now had the “men” to perform larger and more mature shows, without having to compromise their strict emphasis on innocence, purity, and morality. With the appearance of specialised *otokoyaku*, gender performance began to play a pivotal role in the Revue’s performance aesthetic, becoming essentially indispensable, to the “fantasy adventure”.

It was from this production onward that the *otokoyaku* began to overshadow *musumeyaku* in popularity. Perhaps this is owing to the novelty of seeing beautiful young ‘men’<sup>89</sup>; or it could be to do with the increased effeminacy that the *musumeyaku* had to perform to balance the *otokoyaku* “masculinity” In a theatre of “dreams”, as Takarazuka was building itself up to be, it may well be that the dreams of the audience were to overcome their own gender (society-imposed) limitations, as Abbitt suggests.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>One of the two troupes, mentioned previously. The other troupe being the Moon troupe.

<sup>88</sup>Amano 2009, p.12

<sup>89</sup>Berlin 1988, p.151

<sup>90</sup>Abbitt 2001, p. 252



*Mon Paris* was also the first show to create the dream-like atmosphere that Takarazuka is now recognised for. Rich backgrounds, representative of places most viewers had never visited were combined with sexually alluring costumes,<sup>91</sup> as had never been seen in any of its previous productions. Although the costumes were modest compared to those used by performers in Europe, nevertheless the suggestive beading and low-cut bodice fronts made the relatively physically immature performers appear more sexually appealing. However, apart from the sexually charged elements, the performance still contained a sense of romance given by the focus on the main characters of the recently wedded couple. The grandeur and the exoticism expressed through costuming and sets, as we will come to see in the following chapter, are elements of the “fantasy adventure” performance style that Takarazuka is renowned for.

*Mon Paris* and subsequent shows were all staged in the newly built Takarazuka *Daigekijō* (Takarazuka Grand Theatre), which is a short walk from the Takarazuka station. Built in 1924, this facility was the largest theatre in Asia and was equipped with new, state of the art technologies including revolving stages<sup>92</sup> and hydraulic trap lifts. The new theatre allowed for even more fantastic scenery, dramatic scene-changes, and fast-paced performances, helping Takarazuka in their development of what would later be named “fantasy adventure”. The golden age ushered in by *Mon Paris* allowed Kobayashi to build a Takarazuka theatre in Tokyo in 1934. This is important because it clearly shows that Takarazuka was anything but an “amateur” theatre, since it now had two main places of performance in major cities.

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<sup>91</sup>Stickland 2004, p.71

<sup>92</sup>Revolving stages (*mawari butai*) were originally invented for Kabuki. Takarazuka had the most modern version of its time.

Pleased with the success of *Mon Paris*, Kobayashi next sent Shirai<sup>93</sup> to the West in 1928, where he stayed for a year. This time inspiration was drawn from Ziegfeld Follies,<sup>94</sup> Josephine Baker (1906-1975),<sup>95</sup> and Maurice Chevalier (1888 – 1972).<sup>96</sup> Shirai was particularly impressed by Les Jackson Girls, a group of British dancers popular at the Folies Bergère<sup>97</sup> who were similar to Takarazuka in the way they were educated and trained in a strict, morally upright fashion:

“...Jackson’s Girls dance in a group of sixteen, and have been appearing in this Folies Bergère for more than a year...There is a school in Britain for the Jackson Girls where they get educated, and go out to perform in revues and theatres in different countries with their own repertoires. They receive a very strict training, lead a very controlled group life, and never dance in the nude. On stage, all of them appear animated, pure-hearted and jolly. They are so thoroughly disciplined in group dance that they dance with any fast tempo really in a precise line, in perfect order as if they are a

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<sup>93</sup>Previously he had travelled with Kishida, as his assistant, to search for inspiration.

<sup>94</sup>Ziegfeld Follies refers to the elaborate Broadway theatrical productions that ran from 1907 to 1931. It was known for glamour, extravagance and beautiful women. Ziegfeld was inspired by the Parisian Folies Bergère.

<sup>95</sup>Josephine Baker was a famous performer, who had taken part in “La Revue Negre” and “Follies Bergère”. She also performed in “Ziegfeld Follies”. She was well known for dancing in very risqué outfits, often almost nude.

<sup>96</sup>Maurice Chevalier was a renowned French entertainer who also performed in the “Follies Bergère.”

<sup>97</sup>The Folies Bergère is a cabaret music hall in Paris, France. At the beginning of the 20th century, particularly from 1918 onwards it became well known for Paul Derval’s (1880 – 1966) revues which consisted of extravagant costumes, effects and sets, as well as nude women. Shows also focused on the “exoticism” of things and people from other cultures, in that respect not being completely dissimilar to Takarazuka.

single person...their popularity is also something special. While the erotic or the extraordinary may gain temporary popularity but easily become boring, the Jackson Girls continue to attract people.

I think this is a victory of innocence.”<sup>98</sup>

This quote in the Takarazuka-published magazine *Kageki* (Opera)<sup>99</sup> explains the parallels between Takarazuka and Les Jackson Girls, highlighting the importance of staying appealing by being innocent. This strengthened Kobayashi’s resolve about the need for Takarazuka to be viewed as a wholesome, morally sound place for young girls. The continued focus on innocence was particularly important as it also helped Takarazuka to distinguish itself from the other all-girl performance groups who had begun to appear around the mid-twenties in Japan, such as the Osaka (Shōjo) Shōchiku Kagekidan ( Osaka [Girl’s] Opera Company) and the Shōchiku Shōjo Kagekidan (Shōchiku [Girl’s] Opera Company), which was based in Tokyo.<sup>100</sup> These groups attracted audiences with their glitzy and often very risqué performances, and, because of their respective locations near red-light districts, they were perceived as less safe for girls to be associated with. Takarazuka had built its prestige around the morally-safe learning environment it provided for its performers, and thus, it was crucial that the shows would not undermine that.

The new ideas from Les Jacksons Girls such as step dance routines were put into practice in *Parisetto* (Parisetto, 1930). This was the longest production they had done

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<sup>98</sup>Yamanashi 2012, p.77

<sup>99</sup>Shirai in *Kageki*, vol. 125 (August 1930) pp. 6-11 reproduced in Yamanashi 2012, loc.cit.

<sup>100</sup>These two companies were founded in 1922 and 1928 respectively. The word *shōjo* was removed from their names in 1943 for the Osaka branch and 1945 for the Tokyo branch. – see Stickland 2004, p. 20

until then, consisting of twenty scenes and with a total running length of two hours.<sup>101</sup> The scale of the production would suggest at this point Takarazuka was distancing itself even further from its origins as an amateur theatre. Another clear indicator of this trend were the overseas tours that they started in 1938, when they performed in 26 cities across Germany, Italy and Poland. Although the original title of the tour, *Dokui Geijutsu Shisetsu* (Germany-Italy Art Mission), would suggest a good-will mission to the allies of Japan in the lead-up to World War II. Kobayashi had negotiated the tour with the Japanese ambassador in Berlin in order to introduce Japanese theatre and music to the West, as can be seen from the following quote:

“I believe that my Takarazuka Girl’s Opera is the dance and drama based Japanese theatre form most accessible to Westerners. Takarazuka incorporates the spirit of Kabuki drama,...,while at the same time Takarazuka is accompanied by Western music. Takarazuka’s teachers and students have for years produced plays and dances for Japanese audiences only. It is time for Takarazuka to leave the ivory tower to challenge the world’s arts head on...In this way we can introduce to the world the most beautiful, graceful and artistic aspects of Japanese culture.”<sup>102</sup>

Kobayashi clearly intended Takarazuka to be an overseas representative of the best of Japanese culture. He was trying to build a theatre for the masses, both locally and internationally. The success of the theatre meant that eventually it was no longer necessary to hide behind a layer of “amateurishness”, so he was free to pursue his dream

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<sup>101</sup>Berlin 1988, p. 100

<sup>102</sup>Yamanashi 2012, p.19

of a new *kokumingeiki*, people's (professional) theatre.<sup>103</sup>

## 2.2 Takarazuka – war years and early postwar revival

Censorship during the war years led to a decrease in the creative freedom of Takarazuka and an increase in nationalist performances, which made the theatre an instrument of political and military propaganda. They were restricted not only in terms of performance content, such as the ban on showing bare legs during the kick dance, but also in terms of expression, owing to the 1938 ban on foreign loan words. The increasingly strict regulations forced Takarazuka to change its aesthetic to a more traditionally Japanese style of performance. The backgrounds employed by the theatre began to change from romanticised dream lands into battlefields,<sup>104</sup> while the lavish costumes were replaced with “ordinary citizens’ clothing or uniforms worn by [...] members of patriotic associations, and military personnel”.<sup>105</sup> The change in aesthetic was made complete by the alteration of storylines into tales of war. The heroes of the stories were now sailors, soldiers or pilots who performed to politically charged music and lyrics. This made it easier for boys and young men to sympathise with the characters, but it was done at the cost of the female and younger audiences.<sup>106</sup> These changes were only part of a shift in popular culture towards patriotism (with the

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<sup>103</sup>However, the nomenclature related to the actresses, who are referred to as *seito* (student) remains intact today more as a formality rather than any genuine belief that the girls are still inexperienced performers.

<sup>104</sup>Stickland 2008, p.39

<sup>105</sup>Stickland 2004, p.81

<sup>106</sup>Yamanashi 2012, p.23

impending war), and it to girl's culture becoming superfluous. The distancing from shōjo culture resulted in the removal of the word *shōjo* (young girl) from the company's title in 1940.<sup>107</sup> The new name *Takarazuka Kagekidan* (The Takarazuka Revue<sup>108</sup>) is the one that remains in use today.

In 1944, 30 years after its first performance, both Takarazuka's venues, along with all large theatres in Japan's major cities, were closed under the *Dai-ichiji kessen hijō sochihō* (First Emergency Measures Ordinance).<sup>109</sup> The theatres remained closed until the war ended. Although the Takarazuka Grand theatre in Hyōgo prefecture was then, after Japan's defeat, occupied by American forces, it was allowed to open again in 1946. The Tokyo Takarazuka theatre, however, remained under occupation and was not returned to the company until 1954.<sup>110</sup> Takarazuka had lost many spectators during the war, due to the departure of popular stars, as well as the change in material. As soon as the war ended and the theatres were restored to the company, Takarazuka returned to its pre-war style of performance with the combination of the operetta *Karumen* (Carmen, 1950 ) and the revue *Haru no odori: ai no yume* (Spring dance: reveries of love,<sup>111</sup> 1946). This show attracted large audiences owing to its "passion and dreamy romance

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<sup>107</sup>Stickland 2008, p.37

<sup>108</sup>Today it is referred to as "The Takarazuka Revue" but during the war many foreign loan words were forbidden. "Opera" however, was from Italian, and Italy was one of Japan's allies so it was allowed. For more information see Yamanashi 2012, p.23

<sup>109</sup>Stickland 2004, p.86

<sup>110</sup>The authorities in Tokyo had decided to keep Tokyo Takarazuka theatre as a place of entertainment for the Allied Ttoops and renamed it the Ernie Pyle Theatre after a recently killed popular war correspondent. See Berlin, 1988, p.112, and Kobayashi, I. "*Āni Pairu no mae ni tachite*" (Standing before Ernie Pyle), from *Takarazuka Manpitsu* (Takarazuka Jottings). 1980, from:

[http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001256/files/46657\\_29245.html](http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/001256/files/46657_29245.html) - last accessed 6/1/2015

<sup>111</sup>'Yume' technically means 'dream', but here I am using Stickland's translation (2008, p.42).

of the subject matter, the exquisite costumes and, above all, the return of the glamorous *otokoyaku*.”<sup>112</sup>

It is important to note that despite the popularity of the revue type shows, Kobayashi had tried from the earliest performances of Takarazuka to involve Japanese culture in the performances and create a balance between Japanese and Western elements.<sup>113</sup> In 1921 Takarazuka staged *Haru kara aki he* (From spring until autumn): a twenty minute program of Japanese traditional dance. Before this, they had staged many myths, legends and well-known Japanese stories such as *Urashimatarō* (The Tale of Urashimatarō, 1914), *Taketori Monogatari* (The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter, 1916), and *Kyūdo Ōji* (The Prince of the Barn Door, 1918). Later, there were numerous shows adapted from Kabuki, Nō, and Kyōgen such as *Sumidagawa* (The Sumida River, 1921) and *Momijigari* (Surrounded by autumn leaves, 1931).<sup>114</sup> However, it was *Genji Monogatari* (The Tale of Genji, 1957) that brought success to *nihonmono* which usually dealt with topics such as loss, and the sense of impermanence of the world. After *Genji Monogatari* different retellings were staged such as *Oboro Genji* (Misty Genji, 1961). However, Takarazuka remained best known for its revue type shows. In the last two decades, *nihonmono* have continued to be performed by all of the troupes, although *Yuki gumi* remains the main performer.

Despite the initial increase after *Karumen/Haru no Odori*, audiences soon began to shrink, owing, in part, to the departures of several well-loved stars that went on to pursue careers in film. It was at this point, in 1951, that Takarazuka staged its first

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<sup>112</sup>Stickland 2008, p.42

<sup>113</sup>Shimizu 2007, p.84

<sup>114</sup>loc.cit.

full-length feature, *Gu Bijin* (Miss Yu, the beautiful).<sup>115</sup> Until then Takarazuka had staged shows comprising of two or more separate parts. *Gu Bijin* was the first show not to follow this pattern. It was a tragic love story set in ancient China, and it featured lavish sets, vividly coloured Chinese costumes and live horses.<sup>116</sup> The sets were not only ornate but also realistic in detail. Once again grandeur, romanticism and exoticism combined to create an instant hit. In this sense it could be said that *Gu Bijin* built upon the traditions started with *Mon Paris* (1927), and developed them further. Through *Gu Bijin* Takarazuka re-established itself as a theatre of extravagance and romance

After the war slowly Takarazuka began changing its style from French revue to Broadway, owing to the influx of new, mainly American, directors. Takarazuka had always followed international trends of popularity, and post-war, America had become the new power in entertainment, not in part owing to its new political and economic advancements. Thus, with the help of directors such as Gemze de Lappe (1922 - ) and Sammy Bayes (1939 - ) Takarazuka staged shows like *Oklahoma* (de Lappe; 1967) and *West Side Story* (Bayes; 1968). Aside from de Lappe and Bayes; Takarazuka also employed Edward Roll to direct *Kaiten Mokuba* (Carousel, 1969). More recently Takarazuka has brought in the Kunze-Levay team, with the various performances of *Elisabeth* (1997, 1997, 1998, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2014), Darren Lee (*Fancy Dance*, 2007), Frank Wildhorn (*Scarlet Pimpernel*, 2008, 2010), and Gerard Presgúrvc (*Romeo and Juliette* 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013; and *Nemuranai Otoko – Napoleon* , [The Man who did not sleep – Napoleon], 2014).

With the death of Kobayashi in 1957, Takarazuka changed administration. He

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<sup>115</sup>Translation by Stickland 2008, p.43. *Gu Bijin* was directed by Shirai Tetsuzō.

<sup>116</sup>Stickland 2008, p.43



was succeeded by his third son, Yonezō (1909 - 1969), who oversaw Takarazuka's continued reflection of the freer, more relaxed sexual mores of contemporary Japanese society. In 1960 Takarazuka staged *Karei Naru Shirabyōshi* (1000 Colourful Musical Beats), a show which was centered on the leading *otokoyaku* performers switching genders from one scene to the next. Stickland notes that this aspect was likely a factor in the show's success because it allowed the audience to experience the "erotic charm" of switching from handsome men to beautiful women.<sup>117</sup>

De Lappe was particularly restrictive with her direction for *Oklahoma*, insisting on realistic acting and on Takarazuka performing in a manner that was faithful to the original which meant the *otokoyaku* were forbidden from wearing coloured eye-shadow and false eye-lashes, and had to wear brown make-up, so as to appear more masculine.<sup>118</sup> This change, however, was not particularly well received by either the *otokoyaku* or, indeed, the fans,<sup>119</sup> possibly because Takarazuka had already developed and established an aesthetic which was not intended to be realistic, but rather, a world of fancy. A further example of the effects of added realism is shown in the rendition of *Veronique* (1979/1998) done under the direction of French dramatist Nicolas Bataille (1926 – 2008). Once again, having the *otokoyaku* resemble real men too much was problematic as it made the show's drama too realistic for some, as the critic Nakamura Shin'ichirō recorded: "the Takarazuka world which is usually committed to everything beautiful through thorough stylization is now directed to create avant-garde realism..."<sup>120</sup> We can see from this criticism how important it is for Takarazuka to

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<sup>117</sup>Stickland 2004, p.92

<sup>118</sup>Stickland 2008, p.45

<sup>119</sup>Loc cit.

<sup>120</sup>Nakamura Shin'ichirō (1918 – 1997) in Yamanashi 2012, p. 96

maintain its style and how their performance of gender is limited by this style. The attitudes expressed above serve to reinforce Takarazuka as a theatre where realism is only important in so far as it allows the creation of a fantastic alternative reality. In other words, a careful balance must be struck between fantasy (or otherworldliness) and realism, in order for the fans to be satisfied.

### **2.3 Takarazuka in the 1970s – The *Berusaiyu no Bara* boom**

Despite the positive effects of the economic growth that occurred in Japan at the beginning of the 1970s, Takarazuka's audiences once again began to dwindle. Stickland suggests that this is owed to either the optimism that resulted from the economic development, which meant that audiences no longer needed escapism through stage performances, or, alternatively owed to the fact that material goods (including television sets) were becoming very affordable to the point that family income was spent in purchasing them, rather than spending time at the theatre.<sup>121</sup> The easier access to televisions also meant Takarazuka was facing increasing competition, and had to try and stay relevant and attractive to audiences.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, the number of applicants to the Takarazuka Music School also declined.

Takarazuka reversed its fortunes once again in 1974 with the staging of *Berusaiyu no Bara* (The Rose of Versailles), the opulent romance story (already mentioned) set at the court of Marie Antoinette. This was based on the best-selling

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<sup>121</sup>Stickland 2008, p.48

<sup>122</sup>op.cit. p.46

Japanese *manga* (comic) of the same name, by Ikeda Riyoko and it featured the gallant Oscar, a girl raised as a boy from birth in order to continue the patrilineal post of general in the Queen's guard. *Berusaiyu no bara* was responsible for the dramatic increase in popularity for the company and established the top star system that is still the current model of performer hierarchy in the company. The show has come to be synonymous with the company due to its success and for reinforcing Takarazuka's image as a theatre of extravagant visual elements and romance. The theme song *Ai Areba Koso* (Because there is love) served to cement the connection between Takarazuka and excessive romanticism. This song depicts all the varying aspects of the ideal love that Takarazuka aims to portray: filial, friendly, romantic and tragic. It is what Yamanashi refers to as *ningen'ai* (human love), in other words, love that is shared between everyone in the world.<sup>123</sup> Yamanashi argues that the element of love is the foremost trait of Takarazuka's "fantasy adventure" performances.<sup>124</sup> It relies on the universality of the emotion to create stories that are appealing to a varied audience, as will be discussed in chapter 4.

Because of the complexity of the original series, *Berusaiyu no bara* proved to be flexible enough to allow for several retellings of the same story, from the perspective of different characters. Each of several reprises (the most recent being the 2014, *Oscar* and *Fersen* versions, which focus on their respective title characters) have allowed for reinterpretation and reinvention, as well as, naturally, new goods associated with the production, including DVD releases of previous productions. *Berusaiyu no bara* continues to attract and fascinate new and old viewers alike, while consistently

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<sup>123</sup>Yamanashi 2012, p.139

<sup>124</sup>op.cit., p.135

reinforcing the premise that the Takarazuka experience is centered on romance and beauty.

The director of *Berusaiyu no bara*, Ueda Shinji (1933 – ) followed this great success with *Kaze to tomo ni sarinu*, the adaptation of Margaret Mitchell's famous novel *Gone with the wind*, in 1977. The novel is set in America's Civil War period (1861-1865) and follows the life of the spoiled daughter of a rich plantation owner, Scarlett O'Hara as she faces the fallout of war, the death of her mother, her first and second husbands, and the birth of her daughter. The entire plot takes place against a background of slavery, war, betrayal, cruelty and death with Scarlett breaking the social norms of the time to emerge as a self-sufficient business woman whose stubbornness and hot-temper loses her the love of Rhett Butler, the main love interest.

We can view this as another example of how Takarazuka had slowly come to change its aesthetic to a more mature, and, at times, darker one,<sup>125</sup> in an effort to stay relevant to the public. In altering their style to include elements of death, loss and tragedy, Takarazuka was now able to appeal to more of the audience's emotions and make a bigger impact. This tactic was successful, since over a million viewers attended the two shows, "Butler" and "Scarlett" (again, restaging with a shift in the focus of the story to the character named in the title) in the first two years after the original performance.<sup>126</sup>

From the above we can see a shift in Takarazuka's aesthetics from French-inspired glitzy and light-hearted performance style of the late 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s to a more mature, more dramatic, slightly darker and more cohesive style

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<sup>125</sup>Although Takarazuka was originally intended to be light entertainment, it has consistently challenged itself with more mature pieces as can be seen with the staging of *Karumen and, Gu Bijin*.

<sup>126</sup>Stickland 2004, p.96

beginning with *Gu Bijin* (1951) and culminating in *Berusaiyu no Bara* (1974) and *Kaze to tomo ni sarinu* (1977). Instead of twenty different scenes, the shows evolved into the program that they still have in the present day of one full story and one revue which encompasses the elements brought in with *Parisette* and *Mon Paris*, such as the line dance, and the use of the Jessnertreppen with quick changes in setting. Stories like *Gu Bijin*, *Berusaiyu no Bara* and *Kaze to tomo ni sarinu* are presented in two acts. When this happens it is customary to have a very short revue instead of a full length one.<sup>127</sup>

With the restaging of *Berusaiyu no Bara* between 1989 and 1991 once more, audiences increased, allowing Takarazuka to rebuild and modernise its Grand Theatre and continue to perform, and explore the “fantasy adventure” aesthetic for which they had become known.

## **2.4 Takarazuka and the Hanshin – Awaji earthquake**

On January 17<sup>th</sup> 1995 the Hanshin-Awaji area suffered a devastating earthquake. Takarazuka’s Grand Theatre sustained extensive damage and was closed. However, performances were simply relocated rather than cancelled. Despite the resilience of the performers, audience numbers dropped and remained low for two years following the earthquake due to damage to the railway infrastructure, as well the fact that most of a family’s income would have gone on necessities and rebuilding rather than extravagances like theatre-going.

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<sup>127</sup>See for example, *Gu Bijin* (1951, 2009), *Berusaiyu no bara* (1974,1975,1989,1990, 2000, 2006, 2013) *Gone with the Wind* (1977, 1978, 1984, 1988, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2013, 2014), *Romeo and Juliette* (2010, 2011, 2012,2013), *Erizabēto* (1996,1997,1998,2002,2005,2007,2009,2014)

Nevertheless Takarazuka persevered and audiences did return to the Grand Theatre, perhaps because, as director Ueda Shinji suggests, in dark times people look to the colourful ‘fantasy world’ that Takarazuka provides.<sup>128</sup> Post-earthquake Takarazuka continued to perform their usual mixture of romantic shows, both sweet and tragic, as well as *nihonmono* (shows of a Japanese origin) which were often sombre pieces about the transience of the world.<sup>129</sup> In almost all cases, these stories were followed by glitzy, fast-paced revues, which were in-keeping with Takarazuka’s revue tradition which had, by now, been firmly established. That is to say, Takarazuka combined both the Western-influenced revue style performances with traditional Japanese pieces, thus continuing to make themselves appealing to a broad range of audiences.

Takarazuka continued to expand, adding a new performing troupe in 1998. Named *Sora gumi* (the Cosmos Troupe),<sup>130</sup> this troupe allowed for even more material to be performed by Takarazuka. *Sora gumi* was also used to reintroduce *Karumen* as *Gekijō* (Passion, 1998), which had not been staged since 1948, and a new version of the ever popular *Rose of Versailles* (2001). The latter was done as a celebration of Takarazuka’s history after the entry into the new millennium, to remind both the casts and audiences alike about Takarazuka’s traditions. It served to once again emphasise the aesthetic of a dream-world which by then Takarazuka had spent eighty-seven years in crafting.

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<sup>128</sup>Ueda Shinji in Stickland, 2008, p 48.

<sup>129</sup>See for example: *Akane sasu murasaki no hana* (1995), *Wakaki hi no uta wo wasureji* (1995)

<sup>130</sup>Stickland, 2004, p.69

## 2.7 Takarazuka - 2000s and beyond

Since the turn of the century Takarazuka has continued to merge old favourites with new and exciting musicals both from Japan and abroad. It has experimented with different subject matters, some more serious than others.<sup>131</sup> It has continued to experiment with foreign musicals, staging the Arthur Kopit (stage play) and Maury Yeston (music and lyrics) version of *Phantom of the Opera*, named *Phantom*, and adapted literally and phonetically as *Fantomu* (2004, 2006, 2011). In addition to the ornate turn-of-century costumes and the lavish sets customary of Takarazuka, the story itself suits the *otokoyaku* centric style that Takarazuka has developed. Unlike the Andrew-Lloyd Webber version with its disturbing and dark content, the Kopit-Yeston version which turns the Phantom into a hero and glosses over the grotesque and unpleasant murder scenes was more suitable for Takarazuka to adapt because it was consistent with Takarazuka's established aesthetic of depicting 'dream worlds' which are lead by *otokoyaku*.

Apart from *Fantomu*, in the last 12 years Takarazuka has also released a version of the Italian opera *Il trovatore*, under the title *Honoo ni kuchizuke wo* (A kiss to the flames, 2005), a version of *Othello* entitled *Hakuchuu no inazuma* (Lightning in the daytime, 2003-04), and Gerard Presgurvic's *Romeo and Juliette* (based on the French musical of the same name) which was staged in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 by the Star, Snow, Moon and Star troupes again respectively. It has also staged *Shangri-La no shiro* (The castle of Shangri-la, Cosmos Troupe, 2010), a fantasy tale about a dystopian future

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<sup>131</sup>Such as, *Hō-Ō den* (The Legend of the Phoenix, 2002), which features a princess who was resolved not to marry, and would behead any suitors who got her riddles wrong.

where water is almost non-existent, *Ginga Eiyū Densetsu* (The Legend of Galaxy Heroes, Cosmos troupe, 2012), a fast-paced, visually impacting show about intergalactic warfare,<sup>132</sup> *Jin* (Snow Troupe, 2012, Moon Troupe 2014) the tale of a time-travelling doctor, and most recently restaged in sequence *Berusaiyu no Bara, Oscar* (Cosmos troupe, 2014) and *Fersen and Marie-Antoinette* (Snow troupe, 2014) versions, and *Kaze to tomo ni sarinu* (Gone with the Wind, Cosmos troupe, 2013, Moon troupe, 2014).

Looking at the pattern in restaging of old shows and staging of new shows we can deduce that Takarazuka continues to draw inspiration for shows from both old and new sources, but more importantly, that it is constantly experimenting with different elements in order to maintain its success and existence. We can also see that it returns to its most popular shows periodically in order to emphasize its impressive history and allow new audiences to experience core examples of the Takarazuka aesthetics. Furthermore, the shows chosen build upon the established tropes that the audience is familiar with, and any innovation is done within the established style. This approach allows for experimentation and at the same time serves to perpetuate the style that has become representative of Takarazuka. Furthermore, Takarazuka does not refrain from handling materials which are not necessarily ideal for its stage and aesthetics. It also is not scared of handling materials that are not necessarily ideal for the Takarazuka stage and its aesthetics. An identifiable set of approaches have been developed around the adaptation of such materials – the aforementioned “takarazukalization” defined by Marumoto and it is this process, as applied to *Erizabēto*, which is the focus of my thesis.

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<sup>132</sup>For the latter, apart from the carefully crafted stage backgrounds Takarazuka used animation as well as lasers to create a futuristic odyssey that was as visually charged as it was entertaining.



## Chapter 3

### 3.1 Introduction to “fantasy adventure”

The term “fantasy adventure”, as mentioned in chapter 1 was devised by the then director of Takarazuka, Kobayashi Kōhei. It was first used to refer to *Berusaiyu no bara* which, as mentioned in chapter 2, was the pinnacle of Takarazuka’s evolution until 1974. As such, with *Berusaiyu no bara* being representative of Takarazuka’s established performance style, the term “fantasy adventure” has become inextricably linked to Takarazuka’s aesthetics. It involves various elements of performance, many of which, as discussed earlier, are borrowed from both Western and Eastern modes of performance, thereby making Takarazuka an “intertextural collage” of ideas, cultures and eras.<sup>133</sup>

To explain Takarazuka’s aesthetic elements I will be mainly referring to Yamanashi’s analysis, which is the most comprehensive in its scope. Yamanashi identifies three main elements that make up the “fantasy adventure”: 1) music, 2) stage performance techniques, and 3) stage sets and costumes. She also analyses the key aspects of Takarazuka’s dramaturgical ideology, which combine with the previous three elements to create Takarazuka’s distinct style. The themes she identifies are: the universality of human drama and love, and intentional mannerism. Yamanashi discusses love, specifically “romantic love”, *ren’ai*, at length as Takarazuka’s most important, defining, element.

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<sup>133</sup> Yamanashi 2012, p.110

### 3.2 *Ren'ai* - the concept of romantic love

Yamanashi identifies love as “the most important ethos of Takarazuka”.<sup>134</sup> The concept of *ren'ai* (romantic love) in Japanese is a recent concept. It first appeared in the year 1887 as a definition for the French word *amour*.<sup>135</sup> *Ren'ai* expressed the Western concept of love as something based on the “dualism of the soul and body” and also on love based solely on sentimental desire, “in which a man could devote his affection, even to a married woman, but with no sexual involvement”.<sup>136</sup> *Ren'ai* therefore came to refer to “pure” love irrespective of whether there was sexual involvement. As we have already seen, Takarazuka, itself a mix of modern ideas, adopted the concept of “romantic love” and made it central to its plays from *Mon Paris* (1927) onwards. In other words, until 1927, while love may have been an element of the performance, it was not necessarily a driving force. Takarazuka slowly built its repertoire of romantic, light-hearted entertainment until the war. After the mid-1940s there was a change in style, and Takarazuka adapted more mature material where the love was darker, such as in *Karumen* (1946), or tragic, such as in *Gu Bijin* (1951).

Takarazuka experimented with different styles in various shows, as discussed earlier, in order to develop their style of performance to make it as appealing as possible to large audiences. In *Berusaiyu no bara* (1974) the main theme of the show described different kinds of love, reinforcing Takarazuka’s image as a theatre of romanticism. *Berusaiyu no bara* also experimented with the sets and costuming to attain a grandeur and opulence previously unreached, thus simultaneously introducing new viewers to the

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<sup>134</sup> Yamanashi 2012, p134

<sup>135</sup> op.cit., p135.

<sup>136</sup> loc cit

“fantasy adventure” while reinforcing its position as a theatre of visual splendor and romance.

The following song introduced in the first scene of the first act, and reprised at various pivotal points in the musical illustrates all the varying aspects of the ideal love that Takarazuka aims to portray. Entitled *Ai Areba Koso* (Because there is love), the song describes various aspects of romantic, idealised love.

“*Ai sore wa tsuyoku/ Ai sore wa kedadaku*

(...)

*Ai sore wa setsunaku .../Ai sore wa hakanaku”*

Love, it is strong/ Love, it is noble.

(...)

Love, it is painful.../ Love, it is evanescent

This focuses the audience’s attention on the *ren’ai* element, the pure love between a man and a woman (specifically, as there are no same-sex couples in Takarazuka).

Since *Berusaiyu no Bara* (1974), the focus on romance has continued to be perpetuated in every performance, irrespective of the actual subject matter; and as such, many topics are simplified, or reduced to key facts, so they can be used to create a love story. This is the case with *Erizabēto*, where several scenes were removed from the original, and many new scenes added, so that romance could be the focus of the story. This will be discussed in further detail in chapter 5.

### 3.3 Emotionality

The universality of Takarazuka is further reflected through the common thread present in all the lead characters. According to Yamanashi, irrespective of their social status or ethnic background,

“...every Takarazuka hero is portrayed as idealist, romantic, naively dedicated to living for his dream, true to himself, speaking out for love and compassion and peace and justice on a global scale.”<sup>137</sup>

By highlighting universal emotions and qualities such as love, hope and courage, Takarazuka’s productions appeal to a broad audience irrespective of the setting of the performance, or, indeed, the audience’s knowledge of a specific time-period or location. Furthermore, by emphasising feelings that everyone in the audience is familiar with, Takarazuka carefully depicts the complexities of humanity in hyper-reality, that is, it depicts humanity in a distorted way. Marumoto also briefly refers to this, explaining that Takarazuka performances are not “appreciated as realistic but rather as a stylised performance...which consists of sentimental elements, that are represented with *kata*, highly conventionalized movements, to entertain the audience.”<sup>138</sup> The combination of emotionality and stylised performance is what creates the “fantasy adventure” fantasy space that Takarazuka is recognised for.

Thus, it can be said that this depiction of the feelings that unite humanity is fundamental to Takarazuka, and is one of its specific aesthetics. Yamanashi argues that

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<sup>137</sup>op.cit., p.107

<sup>138</sup>Marumoto, 2013, p.167

the ideal that “people by nature have many things in common, at least as far as emotional qualities are concerned”, meaning that Takarazuka’s repertoire consists of pieces of “idealism” rather than realism.<sup>139</sup> Marumoto also notes that Takarazuka seems to focus more on idealism in their approach to *Aida*, but he goes on to say that Aida’s final words, wishing that other lovers be protected from death, “do not derived (sic) from a deep insight connected to the dramatic process...the characters do not only appear to be illogical but also too theatrical and even too mawkish.”<sup>140</sup>

Takarazuka is essentially about the romanticised, idealised portrayal of events that evoke strong emotional responses in the audience. Appealing to the audience’s emotions is crucial to the “fantasy adventure” and leads to the cathartic effect, where watching the characters suffer leads to a sympathetic response from the audience. The romance aesthetic of Takarazuka lies in the fact that its hero and heroine must overcome obstacles in order for their love to be united, and their challenges along the way are felt by the sympathetic audience. At times there are happy endings, other times tragic.<sup>141</sup> The audience sees the emotions portrayed on stage and reacts empathetically to them, often crying at the pinnacle of the show. This serves to make them feel involved in the action, as well as to let them experience the cathartic effect of the show. The cathartic effect is not present only in Takarazuka – it plays an important part in many other theatres and in cinema - but it is important that it is recognised as a significant element of Takarazuka’s performance style.

Thus we can conclude that Takarazuka’s performance style combines the

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<sup>139</sup>Yamanashi 2012, p.108

<sup>140</sup>Marumoto 2013, p.167

<sup>141</sup>Interestingly, occasionally the lovers are shown reunited in heaven thus overcoming a tragic finale. The narrative is supported by the orchestral accompaniment to create and highlight intense feelings.

aesthetics of universality with idealism and hyper-reality in order to create a “dream world” that the audience can emotionally participate in. This “fantasy adventure” is supported by many factors including gender performance (see below), sets and staging.

### 3.4 Gender performance

Like all theatre genres, Takarazuka performances are centered on suspension of reality. In Takarazuka, this suspension hinges on the performances of the *otokoyaku* and the *musumeyaku*. They perform based on a set of gendered *kata* (lit. ‘form’) which rely on the stereotypical portrayal of each gender. The “men” created by the *otokoyaku* are not intended to be viewed as real men, but rather as ideal men that belong into the dream world that Takarazuka strives to portray. In the same manner *musumeyaku* portray idealised femininity to offset the masculinity of the *otokoyaku*, often being hyper-feminine. Playwright Ogita Kōichi explains:

“...both the *otoko-yaku* and the *onna-yaku* <sup>142</sup> are constructs that exist within a particular fantasy [or fictional space].”<sup>143</sup>

Regarding the *otokoyaku* Stickland writes that they are “‘ideal men (*risō no dansei*)’, embodying such qualities as delicacy, handsomeness, long legs, gentleness and the ability to speak romantic phrases without embarrassment.”<sup>144</sup> The *kata* applied to performances of these “men”, are a combination of stylised gestures, movements and patterns of speech meant to represent an established stereotypical interpretation of a

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<sup>142</sup>Another word for *musumeyaku*, meaning “woman role”

<sup>143</sup>Nakamura and Matsuo 2003, p.136

<sup>144</sup>Stickland 2008, p.155

gender. More specifically, Takarazuka's masculine *otokoyaku kata* involve imitating early Hollywood actors of the 1940s and 50s and more modern actors such as Alain Delon, Marlon Brando and Jack Nicholson, and singers such as James Dean, Elvis Presley and Michael Jackson.<sup>145</sup>

I will be explaining the *kata* using Stickland's model, the division of the performance into three components: physical, voice and sociolinguistic.<sup>146</sup> The physical *kata* is concerned with looking the part, primarily achieved by the use of clothes, draping and padding. For the *musumeyaku* femininity is expressed through the shoulders, arms and neck, which are often bare. Legs, in contrast are always covered in flesh-coloured tights or fishnet stockings. The décolletage is usually very demure even when playing overtly sexual characters, such as brothel madams.<sup>147</sup>

The *otokoyaku* operates precisely by covering all these areas in order to suggest manliness through wider-shoulders and a straight, thicker torso (created with the use of padding) and strong, long legs, an illusion created using high-heeled boots and long trousers with a high waist. Binders are used to flatten the line of the breasts to help create a "mannish body shape" and an "attractive silhouette like that of a Western male".<sup>148</sup> One might wonder why the ideal is a Western model and not a Japanese one, that is, why a tuxedo and not a kimono? Stickland suggests that it is owed possibly to the fact that the kimono is built in a similar way for both women and men and as such Japanese men are perceived by both the performers and the audience as less markedly

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<sup>145</sup>Roberston 2001, p.13

<sup>146</sup>Stickland 2004, pp.191-203

<sup>147</sup>See for example: *Erizabēto* (1996) Act 2 Scene 4

<sup>148</sup>Former writer/director Kamura Kikuo in Stickland 2008, p.118

masculine.<sup>149</sup> I would posit that apart from that, the audience's fascination with the “(white) Western foreign”<sup>150</sup> also plays an important part in this stylistic decision.

Height is the main determinant in the performance of stereotypical gender, meaning that *otokoyaku* must be taller than their *musumeyaku* counterparts.<sup>151</sup> This is achieved through the use of heels, camouflaged by long, high-waisted trousers with stirrups that pass under the heel. Hair also plays a large part in performing the genders, and *musumeyaku* almost always have long hair, whether natural or augmented by wigs.<sup>152</sup> *Otokoyaku* now are known for their short hair,

The *otokoyaku* perform a special kind of man, an ideal man which is often modelled on the “dandy” concept of white masculinity.<sup>153</sup> “Dandy” refers here to ironically imitating the behaviour of the aristocracy, a trend which was popular at the beginning of the twentieth century in Britain and France. Yamanashi equates dandyism to the *iki* of Takarazuka; that is, the aesthetic ideal. Although it originally referred to mocking elegance, dandyism has come to mean “a man unduly concerned with looking stylish and fashionable”.<sup>154</sup> The dandies themselves were originally performers, adapting mannerisms and styles not their own, and creating illusions to impress their public. We can see how that is a direct parallel to what the *otokoyaku* do. Using Yamanashi's characterisation of the dandy as someone who “appropriates femininity by

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<sup>149</sup>Stickland 2008, p.118

<sup>150</sup>For a discussion on Takarazuka and Occidentalism see Yamanashi 2012, p. 91

<sup>151</sup>Stickland 2004, p.178

<sup>152</sup>There are exceptions to this, such as Sally in *Me and My Girl* (1987-88, 1995, 1996, 2008, 2009, 2013). Mina Putti in *Classico Italiano* (2011); or Maria in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (2011).

<sup>153</sup>Stickland 2008, p.118

<sup>154</sup><http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/dandy> – last accessed 6/1/2015.



means of artificial decór”,<sup>155</sup> we can see that the *otokoyaku* approaches masculinity from the same perspective of artificiality, to reach a middle ground combination of gender ambiguity and fantasy.



Fig.1 Contrast between Erizabēto (Hanafusa Mari) and Franz-Joseph, *Erizabēto* (1996)

With the *otokoyaku* being the most recognised aspect of Takarazuka, one must not forget the *musumeyaku* who also have an important role in creating Takarazuka’s “fantasy adventure”. The role of the *musumeyaku* is to balance and promote the *otokoyaku* while performing a stylised ideal femininity. Although there are feminine *kata* also, most sources do not specifically discuss them, so I have divided them into the same three categories as Stickland

The physical *kata*, as mentioned earlier, are focused upon depicting gender using movement, costume and make-up. Where the *otokoyaku* covers, the *musumeyaku* reveals. Neck, shoulders, arms, décolletage, and legs are strategically on display

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<sup>155</sup>Yamanashi 2012, p.104

highlighting the delicacy of the *musumeyaku*'s frame (see Fig.1<sup>156</sup>). Where costumes are intended to cover these key areas, such as is often the case with period costumes, the illusion of ideal femininity is communicated through the cut of the costume (often accentuating the waist). The transformation would not be complete without the make-up which reflects the character's background and also position in the show, with darker make-up used to convey age or a shadier moral position. Thus, younger characters tend to include more pink around the cheek and temple area, and more vivid lip colours suggestive of youthfulness, whereas older characters employ shades of brown to denote their age through pallor. The physical performance of gender is the basis for the entire performance. The carefully crafted gestures combined with skilful makeup and costumes create the characters required for each fantastic adventure, and, along with the vocal and socio-linguistic *kata* give rise to a well-rounded hero or heroine from a dream world.

Another marker of gender is the voice register used by the performers. Although it was not always the case, the *otokoyaku* came to have much lower voices than *musumeyaku*. Throughout the 1930s to the 1950s, popular *otokoyaku* used their "operatic" voices (*uragoe*).<sup>157</sup> However, by the 1960s male-role performers had started to perform in their lower ranges possibly because of the development of microphone technology. Previously they would have had to use their higher range in order for the voice to carry to the back of the theatre. However, with microphones they became able to use their lower range (which previously would not have carried as well).<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup>Unless otherwise mentioned all images were verified in October 2013

<sup>157</sup>Stickland 2008, p.119

<sup>158</sup>Takarazuka started using microphones in the mid-1930s, with the first wireless microphone being introduced in 1955. Berlin 1988, p.295

Nowadays most *otokoyaku* try to attain lower-toned voices, irrespective of their natural ranges. Some performers damage their voice beyond repair, but a “broken” voice will not necessarily preclude the performer from becoming popular, or even reaching top star level.<sup>159</sup> By comparison *musumeyaku* must have clear, high voices to off-set the voices of their *otokoyaku* partners. Sometimes the company will use temporary gender-switching based on the voice *kata* for dramatic effect, or for showing off the versatility of specific performer.<sup>160</sup>

Workings in tandem with the voice *kata* are the sociolinguistic *kata*. The Japanese language has a marked difference in the speech patterns of women and men, with specific words, and particles that tend to be almost exclusively used by men or women. The directors can use the “men’s language” and “women’s language” stereotypes that the audience is familiar with to build up and reinforce the illusion of gender. Using language markers such as the ones above, the director can emphasise a character’s masculinity or femininity, thereby sustaining the gender performance aspect of Takarazuka’s performance style, that is, the “fantasy adventure”. The socio-linguistic *kata* are a crucial aspect of Takarazuka’s gender performance, and one that relies very much on the nature and structure of the Japanese language. The complete performance of all the *kata*, therefore, creates for the audience a formulaic character that can then be decorated with the necessary particulars for the respective show. This means that the character is instantly recognisable to the audience even if it is the first time they are viewing a specific show, and thus, allows their attention to be focused on the drama and the emotion that is being performed. These types of *kata* create an ideal “man” and the

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<sup>159</sup>See for example Mori Keaki (1988 – 1993). Stickland 2004, p.197

<sup>160</sup>See for example *Etoile de Takarazuka*, (DVD) Takarazuka Creative Arts, (2012) where one of the lead *otokoyaku* performed a song switching between *musumeyaku* and *otokoyaku* style.

ideal female companion appropriate for a “fantasy adventure”.

As mentioned previously, the *otokoyaku* embody an ideal “man, who is passionate and romantic, unafraid of being sentimental. These “men” are often courageous, outspoken and ardently in love with the character of the lead *musumeyaku*. In contrast, female characters in Takarazuka are often docile, and humble. They contrast and temper the impetuosity and grandeur of the lead male character. This means, often they are impossibly kind, unselfish, forgiving and understanding.<sup>161</sup> No matter the case, the main purpose of the *musumeyaku* is to put the *otokoyaku* in the most favourable light possible, so that “he” can gain the admiration of the audience. In many ways, she is like a mirror, reflecting the *otokoyaku*'s brilliance. Thus, in everything she must come second to the *otokoyaku*, often receiving fewer lines (both in dialogue and songs) and fewer appearances overall. In songs she will often receive the harmonies, and in dance she will be the more passive of the two, being danced *with*, rather than *dancing*. This dynamic is slowly changing with stronger female roles coming through, particularly in the last decade. Beginning with *Berusaiyu no Bara* (1974), Takarazuka began introducing stronger female characters, who lived for more than just romance. The main character, Oscar, is focused more on saving France than discovering love. Takarazuka has shown that it can reconcile strong female characters with the aesthetic of the dream world, and it is a question for the future whether such characters will increase, or whether the more passive and static stock *musumeyaku* characters will continue to be performed.

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<sup>161</sup>Sometimes a character may embody the worst stereotypes about femininity, and serve as comic relief. Often these characters do not get paired with an *otokoyaku*, possibly highlighting their inability to be heroines owing to their lack of the idealised traits mentioned earlier.

### 3.5 Staging and costumes

Takarazuka is renowned for the lavishly embellished costumes and the ornate sets. These two elements are a key part of its “fantasy adventure” aesthetic. The brightly-coloured stage sets and costumes help create a strong visual effect that fascinates and entertains. Apart from the directors, choreographers, and orchestra performers, Takarazuka staff includes numerous costume-makers, seamstresses and wig-makers, which help project the dream-world through fabric, spangles and carefully styled wigs and hair pieces. The stage itself, naturally, plays an important part in the performance of the fantasy adventure.

As mentioned earlier, Takarazuka adapted Leopold Jesner’s “Jesnertreppen” for *Mon Paris*. Originally it was a sixteen-step staircase which was used by the performers to descend in formation, while singing, imitating their European counterparts. Standardised at twenty-six steps, the “Jesnertreppen” is still in use today, in every revue Takarazuka does. New technological advancements have allowed for the staircase to be “tracer-lit”,<sup>162</sup> so it can be used to change colour or “blink” in time with the music, or create its own individual patterns while the performers are descending it. This, in combination with the ostrich feather ornamentation, makes Takarazuka finales particularly visually dazzling. The ostrich feathers were used for the first time in *Parisette* (1930) when Amatsu Otome, the first top-star of Takarazuka, wore a hat decorated with ostrich feathers. This has evolved over time, and today the top star carries fanned on her shoulders about one hundred and fifty ostrich feathers, to highlight

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<sup>162</sup>Yamanashi 2012, p.81

her status.<sup>163</sup> This tradition, combined with the kaleidoscopic show of the Jessnertreppen lights, ensures that all Takarazuka finales are visually impacting and memorable – a fitting end for a “fantasy adventure”.

Another feature of the Takarazuka stage is the *ginkyō* (lit. silver bridge)<sup>164</sup> which is a special stage that circles the orchestra pit going near to the first row of seats before re-joining the main stage. The purpose of this apron-stage is to give the performers (particularly the stars) the opportunity to come even closer to the audience so that the audience can approach the dream world being portrayed for them. Takarazuka’s *ginkyō* is inspired by Kabuki’s *hanamichi* which is a 1.2 metre-wide walkway extending from the stage at a right angle. This stage extension allows the performers to come closer to the audience in order to strike a *mie* pose – where the actor “freezes” in motion briefly in order to highlight a particular moment of the performance.<sup>165</sup> In Takarazuka, rather than *mie*, the *ginkyō* allows performers to come closer to the audience when exhibiting a special set of skills, bringing the “dream world” almost to the first row of seats. Apart from the *ginkyō*, however, Takarazuka also has two constructions analogous to the *hanamichi*, on either side of the stage. Both these walkways have lifts to allow for the dramatic entrance and exit of performers.

At the finale, the stars gather in the middle, with other performers in hierarchal order on each side, while the rest of the performers line up on the two *hanamichi*-style stages to the left and the right of the main stage, and on the Jessnertreppen in dance

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<sup>163</sup>Yamanashi 2012, pp.81-82.

<sup>164</sup>Introduced in 1931. See Robertson 1998, p.113

<sup>165</sup>The Kabuki Dictionary – Japanese -

[http://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/dglib/contents/learn/edc\\_dic/dictionary/dic\\_ma/dic\\_ma\\_04.jsp](http://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/dglib/contents/learn/edc_dic/dictionary/dic_ma/dic_ma_04.jsp) - last accessed 6/1/2015

formation. The lights are at their brightest, the Jessnertreppen are entirely lit, and in combination with the opulence of the ostrich feathers and the dazzling costumes it creates a stunning visual effect.

It is now a convention to have a grand finale at the end of every show, irrespective of what kind of story precedes it, or whether the show is in one or two parts. In the same way the finale has certain conventions pertaining to it, the rest of the show also has certain conventions it must apply in order to be suitable for the Takarazuka stage. Thus, all adaptations or stories created for the Takarazuka stage, are altered to fit these performance conventions: to focus on romantic love, to portray ideal heroes and heroines using the different *kata*, and to create visually exciting and entertaining performances.

As outlined in previous chapters, Takarazuka has evolved as a theatre by introducing elements of both Japanese and foreign performance mediums in order to create its own unique style. Inspired by European and American performances, it has achieved a synergetic performance style aimed at creating dream-like performances. These performances include universal themes that everyone can relate to, making it easy for catharsis to occur, and therefore for the audience to become emotionally invested in the theatre. Bypassing very dark and grotesque elements in favour of light, romantic entertainment also increases the range of ages at which the theatre can be enjoyed, making Takarazuka truly a theatre for the masses. In the following chapters we will see how the aspects outlined above were introduced into the Takarazuka version of *Elisabeth*, enabling it to conform to these established conventions and the expected “fantasy adventure” style.

## Chapter 4

### 4.1 Introducing *Elisabeth*

In the early 1990s the popularity of the Takarazuka revue was beginning to wane after an intense and long lasting peak. This peak was due in part to a revival of the hit show *Berusaiyu no bara* (1974) around this time (1989-1990), which we can assume was an attempt to repeat the success of the original and attract a new generation of fans. As mentioned previously, Takarazuka has consistently imported and adapted foreign material from 1927 onwards. Thus, at this time too, the Board of Directors looked abroad for successful pieces in order to boost its ticket sales and popularity once more. What the directors found was *Elisabeth* (1992), which had been staged in Vienna and had been very well received.

The musical is the life story of the last queen of the Habsburg Empire, Elisabeth (1837 – 1898), as told by her assassin, Luigi Lucheni (1873 -1910). The story is centered on the queen's lifelong obsession with death, and the life events which created and strengthened this obsession. The musical had a run of six years in Vienna, during which time it would also inspire several foreign adaptations.<sup>166</sup> Given the Revue's history of success through adaptations of foreign elements and shows, it can be considered a natural step for Takarazuka to look to a foreign musical that was very popular at a time when its own ticket sales were slowing, and adapt it. I would posit that the original musical's popularity was an important factor in the decision-making process,

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<sup>166</sup>In the twenty years since it was first staged it has been performed in five languages in six countries, making it the most successful German-language musical ever. See Rommel, 2007 p.109



despite the fact that the original *Elisabeth* was an antithesis of the dream world the company strove to create, and therefore demanded a more rigorous adaptation process.

#### **4.2 Summary of *Elisabeth***

The musical *Elisabeth* is a stylized biography of the Habsburg Empress, enacted as a montage of twenty-nine fast-changing scenes connected by the narration of Elisabeth's dead assassin, anti-imperial anarchist, Luigi Lucheni. The story begins in the world of the dead with Lucheni being interrogated by celestial judges as to why he had killed the Empress. He answers them, flippantly, that she wanted to die. Then, to corroborate his claims he turns back time to show how Elisabeth developed her obsession for Death. Elisabeth is the daughter of the Duke and Princess of Bavaria. She is free-spirited and wants to shirk royal duties and formalities. At age fifteen she has her first encounter with Death, when she falls from a trapeze. This is the beginning of her relationship with Death, who has fallen in love with her. Death is a young man who resembles Henrich Heine, Elisabeth's favourite poet. Death only appears briefly to bring Elisabeth back to her bed, and then leaves quietly. This marks the beginning of Elisabeth's hallucinations and obsession. Not long after this encounter she is married to the emperor of Austria, Franz-Joseph (against his mother's wishes), believing herself to be in love.

Elisabeth is stifled by the royal duties she faces as part of palace life. Her mother-in-law, Sophie, is demanding and controlling, going so far as to take her children away. When Franz-Joseph asks her to come to Hungary with him because her beauty will charm the people and pacify the active revolutionaries, Elisabeth realises

that her beauty is her power. She, therefore, uses it as a bargaining tool to recover her children from Sophie. In Hungary she garners much favour with the people, but her eldest daughter contracts a fever and dies. Grieving, Elisabeth returns to Austria where she gives birth to a baby boy, Crown-Prince Rudolf. Sophie again intervenes and separates mother and son. When she finds out that Sophie disciplines Rudolf harshly, Elisabeth gives Franz-Joseph an ultimatum asking him to choose between Sophie and herself. He decides in her favour and Elisabeth at last wins the power-struggle against Sophie. However, winning the right to raise Rudolf was just part of the power-struggle; she has grown so egoistical she neglects Rudolf who is befriended by Death – that is to say, develops the same hallucinations that plague Elisabeth.

Sophie is furious. She no longer controls Franz-Joseph and Elisabeth's political stances (pro-Hungary) are dangerous to the equilibrium of the Empire. She intends to diminish Elisabeth's influence over Franz-Joseph by showing him there are other women more beautiful than Elisabeth and getting him to betray her, so she arranges for an exceptionally attractive prostitute to be brought to the palace. Franz-Joseph is seduced and spends the night with her. Unfortunately he contracts a venereal disease which, unaware of, he transmits to Elisabeth. Betrayed and humiliated, Elisabeth leaves the palace to travel around Europe on a tour which would last nearly two decades.

Rudolf grows up in the same stifling system that his mother despised. He does not get along well with his father who is too strict and dismissive. Rudolf is aware of the drastic changes in the political situation of the time and joins the Hungarian revolutionaries. He is discovered and Franz-Joseph threatens to disown him. Around this time Elisabeth returns to Vienna for the first time in many years. Desperate, Rudolf pleads with her to help him by talking to the Emperor. She explains that she has found

her freedom, away from politics and Franz-Joseph, so she cannot help him.

The character of Death appears after Elisabeth leaves and manoeuvres Rudolf to commit suicide. From here on death plagues Elisabeth's family further, killing member after member<sup>167</sup> until, finally, in 1989 at the age of 61, she is ready to welcome her own death, and Lucheni kills her. The last scene shows Elisabeth dying upon receiving a kiss from Death and her corpse being left on the floor while Death walks away, symbolising the futility of her fight for freedom and Death's ultimate victory over her.

The show, which began in the land of the dead, also ends in the land of the dead, creating a sense of circularity and completion. Although the audience are made to feel sympathy for Elisabeth, this is tempered by the knowledge, conveyed by the musical, that her egoism and coldness towards those closest to her are partly responsible for some of the tragic events of her life.

#### **4.3 The development of *Elisabeth***

Empress Elisabeth of Austria is a prominent figure in European history and culture. She is renowned for her great beauty and the strict life-style it took to maintain it. In 1955, Austrian director and screenwriter Ernst Marischka (1893 – 1963) presented to the public the movie *Sissi*; a romanticised, fairy-tale style telling of the empress' life.<sup>168</sup> The movie was extremely well received, and two sequels were created: *Sissi* –

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<sup>167</sup>Act 2 Scene 15 shows some of Elisabeth's relatives (including two of her sisters) being killed one by one: assassination, insanity, drowning and death in a fire.

<sup>168</sup>The movie was based on the play *Sissys Brautfahrt*, by Gustav Holm (1881 – 1950) and Ernst Décsey (1870 – 1941).

*The Young Empress* (1956) and *Sissi – Fateful Years of an Empress* (1957). The first movie became one of the most renowned German language movies, being seen by over twenty million cinema goers.<sup>169</sup> This has made Elisabeth, the former Empress of Austria, even better known amongst German speaking people.

Kunze wanted his musical to work against the sugary image that had been created, and relate the Empress' story as it had been in reality: tragic.<sup>170</sup> He had spent years researching the Empress, and seeking out sources from which he could piece together the real story. He based much of the musical on Elisabeth's own writings, and the accounts of people who had known her.<sup>171</sup> Elisabeth loved art, and she particularly admired the German gothic poet Heinrich Heine (1797 – 1856) whose style she often imitated in her own poems. This is why in the original 1992 Austrian version Death (played by actor Uwe Kröger) was made to resemble Heine. It made sense that Elisabeth's idea of Death, her fantasy, was this man who she felt truly understood her, and for whom she had developed an obsession.<sup>172</sup> This aspect of her, as well as several other references to Heine, were used numerous times throughout the musical and, as such, had to be removed for the Takarazuka adaptation because the Japanese public would have been unaware of the link between Elisabeth and Heine.<sup>173</sup> Kunze also used accounts from people who had known her<sup>174</sup> in order to craft a musical showing not only the tragedy of the Empress' life, but also her real character, which over the years

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<sup>169</sup>The German page dedicated to the Sissi trilogy – [http://www.sissi.de/aktuell/filme\\_trilogie.php](http://www.sissi.de/aktuell/filme_trilogie.php) –last accessed 6/1/2015

<sup>170</sup>Amano 1997, p.53

<sup>171</sup>Rommel, 2007, p.37

<sup>172</sup>op.cit, p.60

<sup>173</sup>Amano 1997, p.68

<sup>174</sup>Rommel, 2007, p.36

had been lost in favour of romanticised renditions of her life.

#### 4.4 Elisabeth – a tragic heroine

Elisabeth is, as the title of the musical suggests, clearly the main character of the show in the original. She is the central figure in most scenes, and is the main topic of discussion in the scenes in which she does not physically appear. She is not presented as someone to idealise, in fact, a large part of the musical is spent by the narrator, anarchist Luigi Lucheni, trying to make the audience dislike her.<sup>175</sup> She is however, depicted in a way that allows the audience to sympathise with, or even pity her. One such scene is act 1 scene 9 where Elisabeth's mother-in-law, Sophie, takes her new-born child away. Earlier, in Scene 8, we can see the young and impressionable Empress being verbally attacked by her mother-in-law and treated like an object. These scenes inspire pity and sympathy for the main character, thereby underpinning the audience's support for Elisabeth's struggle for freedom.

The constant struggle with her mother-in-law, as well as Franz-Joseph's lack of support make the character of Elisabeth all the more pitiable once her eldest daughter dies.<sup>176</sup> The audience is constantly reminded of the hardships of the Empress' life and their attention is uniformly focused on her, as the main character. As I discuss later, this is different in the Takarazuka version, where Elisabeth's struggles become merely obstacles that love needs to overcome, in order for Death who is now the main character,

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<sup>175</sup>Such as in *Elisabeth* (1992) Act 2 Scene 1 where he calls her a "miserly egoist" – "*ein mieser egoist*"

<sup>176</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 9.

to be united with Elisabeth.

Elisabeth is presented in the musical as a tragic figure. She is bullied and controlled by her mother-in-law who takes away her children; two of her children eventually die; her husband betrays her and gives her a venereal disease; she falls into a deep depression, develops an eating disorder, and loses all her family. Kunze and Kupfer do not gloss over the unpleasant details of the Empress' life, rather, they accentuate them. In act 2 scene 3 Elisabeth encounters Madame Windisch, a psychologically unstable woman, who physically attacks the Empress, accusing her of being a fraud because she herself is the real empress. The denouement of the show occurs when Elisabeth at last surrenders to Death. After taking her life, Death leaves the limp body of the empress on the floor and walks away. His actions emphasize the futility of the Empress' life-long struggle, how even in death she is alone, as had been stated in the first song; adding a sense of circularity to the performance.

#### **4.5 The character of Der Tod (Death) in *Elisabeth***

The male character of Der Tod, or Death, is crucial to the depiction of the Empress' troubled life in the musical. His existence helps portray to the audience Elisabeth's suicidal longings. He is, according to the libretto, "young, attractive and erotic... resembling an androgynous pop star, as well as a young Heinrich Heine."<sup>177</sup> Amano interprets his being a young man as a "projection of her [Elisabeth's] sexual

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<sup>177</sup>Rommel, 2007, p.74

desires”<sup>178</sup> As we will come to see later, this image was unfitting for Takarazuka’s romantic “fantasy adventure”, because of the element of overt eroticism, which is at odds with the “dream world” Takarazuka strives to portray.

Another important aspect here is Death’s role in Elisabeth’s life. Although Lucheni refers to him as “His Majesty, Death”<sup>179</sup> and names him as supposedly the reason for Elisabeth’s downfall,<sup>180</sup> he is relatively uninvolved in Elisabeth’s life until towards the end of her life. His appearances only become more frequent, and longer, as Elisabeth’s depression deepens, and he only appears to her and Rudolf.<sup>181</sup> Death uses Elisabeth’s pain to convince her to take her own life and join him but once he has gained her life, he abandons her, reiterating the futility of trying to escape one’s fate. Alternatively, his actions can be interpreted as him having gained what he most desired, Elisabeth’s life, and no longer requiring anything from Elisabeth. Either option is equally bleak. Throughout the show the audience does not, at any point, see Death as an ideal lover, or sympathise with him, and the epilogue only serves to strengthen the audience’s dislike of him. The audience, instead, sympathise with Elisabeth, having seen her traumatic and sorrowful life events.

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<sup>178</sup>Amano, 1997, p.162

<sup>179</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992), Act 1 Scene 1.

<sup>180</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992), Act 1 Scene 8 – “Despite the milk and honey, if you don’t like the taste of life here, it could be very possible that *he* is behind it.”

<sup>181</sup> Death also appears to Franz-Joseph in a dream towards the end of the show, but it is his only encounter as opposed to the series of encounters that both Elisabeth and Rudolf experience.

## 4.6 Themes in *Elisabeth*

*Elisabeth* contains several themes, which are expressed through elements such as dialogue and plot. These themes are important to note the in Viennese version, because Takarazuka alters them greatly for the adaptation. By exploring the changes made to the themes, we can better understand how Takarazuka adapts pieces outside its usual style.

### 4.6.1 Death

The most emphasised element in *Elisabeth* is the theme of death. It is included in the music (through the theme song of Death) and the dialogue, and it is physically represented through the character of Death, as well as the actual deaths of some of the characters. From the first scene we are shown Lucheni's hanging "corpse", as the story begins one hundred years after Elisabeth's murder. The character Death, from his first appearance, stresses his role is to take those who belong to him.<sup>182</sup> The use of shadows as a motif to convey death is present from the beginning, with Elisabeth's mother stating that "there was a shadow on her soul, a curse on her life".<sup>183</sup>

Death not only plagues Elisabeth, but the people around her also, so it is constantly present in the audience's mind. In Act 1 Scene 3, for example, we are shown the Emperor Franz-Joseph refusing a mother's plea, and sentencing her son to death for a minor crime. Death appears in human form to Elisabeth for the second time at her

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<sup>182</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992), Act 1 Scene 1.

<sup>183</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992), Act 1 Scene 1, in Rommel 2007, p.40.



wedding banquet, and warns her that she will lead the empire into destruction, and that he will win in the end:

“But in his arms you are smiling at me  
And where *that* is leading you also know”  
(...)

“But I know I will win!” <sup>184</sup>

As he is, in fact, Death. Elisabeth’s own demise is inevitable. He continues to remind her of the fragility of life by taking her daughter. On this occasion the theme is strongly reinforced using shadows both visually – the stage is largely darkened – and in the song *Die Schatten werden länger* (The shadows are growing longer).<sup>185</sup> As the title suggests, the song is about the darkness slowly encroaching upon Elisabeth’s life. This approach of shadows is visually reflected in the darkness of the stage and the focus of the sole light on Death. The song tells of how Elisabeth is leading Franz-Joseph into the night, and the world is coming to an end, highlighting the theme of death. Just as the shadows are spreading so is death in Elisabeth’s life.

“Even if you seem to give him more/ You pull him into the night  
The shadows are getting longer/It becomes evening before your  
day began  
The shadows are getting longer/ The world dies with you, don't  
hold on to it”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup>Elisabeth (1992) Act 1 Scene 7 “*Noch in seinen Armen lächelst du mir zu.*

*Und wohin das führ’n wird, weißt auch du. (...) ...doch ich weiß, ich gewinn!”*

<sup>185</sup>Elisabeth (1992) Act 1 Scene 9.

<sup>186</sup> Loc. cit. The lyrics are as follows:

“*Auch wenn du ihm scheinbar mehr gibst/ Du ziehst ihn in die nacht  
Die schatten werden laenger/Es wird abend ehe dein tag began*

The shadow motif is referenced often, including at Elisabeth's coronation scene,<sup>187</sup> where it is used to highlight that Elisabeth's life is getting darker and that Death is implicated in it. This effect is strengthened by having Death lead the carriage that Elisabeth and Franz-Joseph are in, literally leading them towards their own destruction. In Act 2 Scene 15 the shadows have completely overcome Elisabeth. She and Franz-Joseph are "on the deck of a sinking world", on a platform simulating the motions of a sinking ship. In the foreground Lucheni counts off her relatives as they are taken by shadows, one by one. Here we are shown for the first time the extent of Death's powers and it serves to reinforce the underlying theme of death. In the final scene, Death at last gains Elisabeth thanks to Lucheni; showing that, indeed, he always has the last word where the living are concerned. Once again the stage is mainly darkened, equating shadows and darkness with death. The theme of Death is heavily reinforced throughout this musical in order to show Elisabeth's connections to it, her subliminal longing for it, and also to foreshadow the future losses she will experience.<sup>188</sup>

#### 4.6.2 Freedom

Another major theme of the Viennese musical is Elisabeth's struggle for absolute freedom. From the very beginning we are shown young Elisabeth longing to

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*Die schatten werden laenger/ Mit dir stirbt die welt, halt dich nicht fest daran"*

<sup>187</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 2 Scene 2.

<sup>188</sup>Although in the original version her longing for Death is mostly alluded to, Kunze, Kupfer and Levay clarify this desire for Death in subsequent versions through the addition of several scenes and songs.

live a life without duties or restraints, free “as a gipsy” to “ride with the wind and write poetry” and to be “unbound”.<sup>189</sup> We are also shown how, at age 15 she is already prevented from her freedom. As she tells her father;

“No, the governess won’t let me out...”

Ironically, her free spirit which attracts the emperor Franz-Joseph to her, and compels him to choose her as his queen, is also what condemns her to a life of misery at the palace: controlled by her mother-in-law and forbidden from enjoying any of her hobbies because they were not deemed acceptable activities for a queen.<sup>190</sup> Elisabeth’s fight for her freedom is encapsulated in her song *Ich gehör nur mir* (I belong only to myself):

“If you want to teach me,

Then you only force me to flee from the burdensome duty.

If you want to convert me

Then I have to tear (myself) away and fly like a bird into the light

[...]

Before I lose myself, I will fight because I belong only to myself!”<sup>191</sup>

This song emphasizes Elisabeth’s desire to be free from any restraints, especially palace duties. It also shows Elisabeth’s strong sense of self and fierce desire for absolute privacy, highlighted by the following lyrics:

“I don’t want to be pressured with questions and wishes and/

From head to feet be looked at by curious eyes/

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<sup>189</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scenes 2-3.

<sup>190</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 7.

<sup>191</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 5.

(...)

I get defensive/when I feel strange eyes on me because/

I belong only to myself.”

As the Empress of Austria, absolute privacy would have been impossible. This tension between her longing and the reality is reinforced by the stage panels on which hundreds of people are drawn looking at her, and later when she is surrounded by the Empress Dowager’s attendants who keep her from escaping.<sup>192</sup> Elisabeth fights for her freedom, but she is constantly haunted by the reality that she does not have freedom so she seeks refuge in herself, and eventually in her visions of Death.

Another example of lack of freedom is Franz-Joseph who is controlled by his mother. His refusal to fight for his freedom directly leads to Elisabeth’s isolation in the palace and subsequent spiralling depression. He is the antithesis of Elisabeth, entrenched into submissiveness, without the will to fight or be his own person until it is too late. We can see this many times in the story: in the way he obeys his mother’s instructions in every circumstance, such as when deciding on legislation, or passing a verdict.<sup>193</sup> The extremity of his obedience is highlighted when his mother takes his first born child away from Elisabeth. Instead of reclaiming the infant for his distraught wife, he tries to appease her by telling her that his mother is more suited to raising the child, then kisses his mother’s hand, a sign of his loyalty and submission.<sup>194</sup> Later, in Act 1 Scene 14, he tells Elisabeth that he will do whatever she bids him to because he does not want to lose her love. Although it appears Franz-Joseph has changed at this point, really, all that is altered is that he has shifted the object of his loyalty and submission,

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<sup>192</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scenes 6 and 7.

<sup>193</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 3.

<sup>194</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 9.

from his mother to Elisabeth.

Elisabeth thinks she has gained her freedom when Franz-Joseph chooses her over his mother. We are quickly shown this is not the case. Act 2 scene 4 shows a disheartened Elisabeth singing about how despite sacrificing everything she has gained “nothing, nothing at all.” This serves to show us that the fight for freedom is perpetual and impossible to win. Elisabeth cannot be free because she is only human and she is restricted by time and circumstances, which, therefore, reinforces the pattern that freedom can be found only in death.

The theme of freedom is also depicted through the character of Madame Windisch, the mentally ill woman who believes herself to be Elisabeth. She is a stark contrast to Elisabeth who is restrained by society, by her title and by her own sanity. Madame Windisch is completely “free”, and we are shown that even the guard’s harsh treatment does not affect her delusions, when at the end of the scene she walks away with her “entourage”. Madame Windisch portrays madness as a way to achieve ultimate freedom. The other way is Death, as we can see from the repeated promises of freedom that he makes to Elisabeth.<sup>195</sup>

Elisabeth’s search for freedom ends with her death, and the implied release from all the constraints of her life. Her plea to Death, “Let me be freed...,”<sup>196</sup> is supposedly fulfilled when Death takes her life. The freedom motif has the role of heightening the tragedy of Elisabeth’s life, which is the result of more than just the loss of human life that the main theme presents us with. Therein lies the tragedy: everything is taken from Elisabeth: her family, her freedom, her sanity, and ultimately her life.

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<sup>195</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scenes 9 and 11.

<sup>196</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 2 Scene 15 Epilogue.

### 4.6.3 Personal Choice

Another major theme of this musical is personal choice and its consequences. We are shown the effects of duty chosen over personal desires as well as those of choosing oneself at the cost of everything else, and the disaster that either of these extremes can bring. Franz-Joseph's choices result in Elisabeth's estrangement, because they give his mother, Sophie, power over her. First when Sophie is imposing a harsh daily regime upon Elisabeth, and he ignores Elisabeth's cry for help,<sup>197</sup> replying that it is for her own good. Secondly, when Sophie takes Elisabeth's new-born daughter, names her after herself and forbids Elisabeth from even seeing her.<sup>198</sup> Similarly, Elisabeth's choices, which come as a result of her selfishness and focus on her own freedom, tend to result in tragedy. Her insistence on bringing the children to Hungary results (unfortunately) in her eldest daughter's death. Her choice to not help Rudolf in order to keep her freedom by staying distant from the Emperor becomes a catalyst for his suicide.<sup>199</sup>

Franz-Joseph also plays a key role in this theme. First, his choice of bride is portrayed as the root of the eventual destruction of the Habsburg dynasty. His choice not to defend Elisabeth leads to Elisabeth's isolation and even strengthens her resolve to gain power over Sophie, indirectly leading to the death of their firstborn. His choice to give into Elisabeth rather than mitigating the damage to their marriage separates them further and causes Sophie to interfere, leading to his infidelity, and to Elisabeth's self-imposed exile. His inflexibility regarding politics, and his gruffness alienate Rudolf

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<sup>197</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 7.

<sup>198</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 8.

<sup>199</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 2 Scene 12.

and make him vulnerable to Death's advances. Reinforced repeatedly throughout the play, the theme of personal choice combines with the other themes of death and freedom to highlight and support them. In chapter 5 I will return to these themes of death, freedom, and personal choice and discuss their adaptation for the Takarazuka version of the musical.

## Chapter 5

### 5.1 Erizabēto and the challenges to achieving “fantasy adventure”

The adaptation of *Elisabeth* to Takarazuka’s “fantasy adventure” style posed several challenges to the Takarazuka team. The process of “takarazukalization” is a thorough one that alters the show from its most fundamental ideological or thematic elements, to its performance elements. Several key characters were significantly altered from the German musical, and these alterations had far reaching impacts on themes and storyline. This chapter examines the alterations to some of main characters, and the themes primarily through changes made to plot and dialogue.

Perhaps the largest challenge facing Takarazuka in the “takarazukalization” adaptation process was the lack of a leading male character in the original version. *Otokoyaku*, as mentioned previously, are one of the outstanding features of Takarazuka’s “fantasy adventure” performance style; therefore it was crucial that a lead “male” role be developed for Takarazuka’s version of *Elisabeth*. Other challenges for the adaptors included the lack of an overt true love pairing, a factor of “fantasy adventure” which has been established earlier as paramount to this style. This therefore necessitated the creation of a romantic couple in Takarazuka’s version. Franz-Joseph, with his great dependency on his mother, would not have made a hero suitable for Takarazuka’s “fantasy adventure”. For this reason I would suggest that the character of Death (which will be referred to by the romanized Japanese pronunciation of his name, Tōto, to avoid confusion) was further developed in order to provide the required romance element. The dark tone of both the story and the subdued set and costuming also needed changing to



suit the established Takarazuka visual form, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

As part of this “takarazukalization”<sup>200</sup> process, the title was also altered to *Erizabēto – ai to shi no Rondo* (*Elisabeth: the rondo of love and death*). A *rondo* is a piece of music that has a recurring refrain between episodes. In this case, the refrain is Death’s theme about loving Elisabeth, which is repeated at important points throughout the musical. Changing the title instantly realigns the attention of the audience: it is not a play purely about *Erizabēto*, it is a play about the repetition of love and death and her interaction with these two elements. Moreover, *Ai to shi no rondo* is Tōto’s main theme, which was written specifically for the Takarazuka version by Levay and Kunze, and in which he expresses his love for *Erizabēto*.<sup>201</sup> This theme is a *rondo*, so it is reprised several times throughout the performance, reminding us of his feelings and their intensity, and also serving as a reinforcement of the romantic element. Kunze and Levay were very involved in the creation of *Erizabēto*, a fact which the director, Koike Shūichirō admits openly.<sup>202</sup> In this sense *Erizabēto* is a carefully struck balance between authenticity and “takarazukalization”.

## **5.2 *Erizabēto* and the character of Tōto as a main character**

Takarazuka, being *otokoyaku*-centric, required an *otokoyaku* lead to carry the story. The character of Death was selected from the male characters in the original musical to fill this role. He was made into an ideal hero, whose rank could surpass even

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<sup>200</sup>Marumoto 2012, p.169

<sup>201</sup>*Erizabēto* (1996) Act 1 Scene 4

<sup>202</sup>Watanabe 2010, p.105

that of the Emperor of Austria. He is present in 22 of the 32 scenes of the musical, surpassing even the title character's appearances.<sup>203</sup> As we will come to see in this section, it is made clear that Tōto is the main character. Tōto is supported in his lead role by the "takarazukalized" Lucheni, who, to avoid confusion, will be referred to onwards as Rukīni, using the romanization of the Japanese pronunciation of his name. Rukīni was altered from the omniscient and derisive narrator into a Takarazuka-esque narrator, who invokes romance and fantasy where necessary, as we will come to see. In the original version, Death is only visible to Elisabeth and Rudolf. Despite Lucheni's suggestion<sup>204</sup> that he is behind the misfortunes of Elisabeth, he does not appear to overtly lead the plot. He seems to be just a player in the performance of Elisabeth's life. His appearances only become more frequent as Elisabeth keeps spiralling into depression, reinforcing the fact he is a mental image Elisabeth has of death. Nevertheless he is referred to as her lifelong love,<sup>205</sup> which is why, I surmise, he was chosen as the lead character of *Erizabēto*.

In the Takarazuka version, Tōto is described as a *shinigami* (lit. god of death) by the Takarazuka directors and essayists alike.<sup>206</sup> He is an anthropomorphic representation of death that subscribes to the rules of gender portrayal which govern *otokoyaku*. These are performed through the different *kata* mentioned earlier: the

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<sup>203</sup>Compare this with the German version, *Elisabeth* (1992) where of the 29 scenes, Death only appears in 13. Erizabēto appears in 20.

<sup>204</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 8 "...Schließlich ist er abgeblitzt! Man kann seinen Groll verstehen D'rum (darum) wenn trotz Milch und Honig ihr das Leben hier nicht schmeckt, dann kann es durchaus möglich sein, dass er dahinter steckt" – "Death is very unhappy to see Elisabeth at Vienna's royal court. After all he was dumped by her. One can understand his anger. So if, despite the milk and honey, you don't like the taste of life there might be the possibility that it is *his* fault."

<sup>205</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 1.

<sup>206</sup>Amano 2009, p.41; Watanabe 2010, p.14.

physical *kata*, focusing on looking like an ideal man; the vocal *kata*, which deals with the sound of the *otokoyaku*, and the socio-linguistic *kata* which is used to reinforce his status. From Act 1 Scene 1 he commands the attention of all the spirits both on, and off the stage with his impressive costume, complete with black wings and a black feathered head piece. The spotlight is focused on him, and so is the attention of the audience. Ruchīni, as narrator, explains (in act 1 scene 1) that *Tōto Kakka* is also known as *Shi* (lit. death). He does so because *Tōto* is the Japanese phonetic representation of the German noun *Tod* meaning “death”, which might not have been understood by the audience. The German reference is most likely kept for the value of being foreign and exotic. Using foreign words to create a sense of exoticism is of course not unique to Takarazuka, but it is nevertheless an aspect of its aesthetic and serves to reinforce the exoticism of the performance. We may conclude that the use of a foreign name for the main character strengthens the image of Death even further as a romantic figure.

In contrast, the Viennese Death was merciless<sup>207</sup>, wild<sup>208</sup> and erotic<sup>209</sup>. He was visible only to Elisabeth (and, later, Rudolf<sup>210</sup>), and he was not the main character. Most importantly, he was not romantic, nor did he show any affection for Elisabeth. Death’s character did not conform to Takarazuka’s performance style so this character had to be changed into the romantic ideal, Tōto. Tōto was specifically redesigned for the Takarazuka version because “fantasy adventure” requires an *otokoyaku*-centric performance<sup>211</sup>. It is Amano’s opinion that the whole Takarazuka version was largely

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<sup>207</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 1 Prologue.

<sup>208</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 7.

<sup>209</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 2 Scene 15 Epilogue.

<sup>210</sup>Watanabe 2010, p.103.

<sup>211</sup>Watanabe, Yoshitaka. “Yoroppa hatsu myūjīkaru no genzai – rokku opera kara supekutakuru myūjīkaru e -”(Musicals which originated in Europe at present – from rock opera to spectacle musical-),

rewritten to allow for this and Watanabe corroborates this.<sup>212</sup> Like all Takarazuka heroes, Tōto is intended to be a portrayal of the “ideal man”, as discussed previously: charming, handsome, romantic, utterly devoted to the heroine, passionate and willing to overcome all the obstacles for love. (See Section 3.1 for the discussion on romanticism as part of Takarazuka’s performance style)

As mentioned in Section 3.1, *ren'ai* (romantic love) is the most important and recognisable element of Takarazuka performance. As such it is a compulsory element of every performance. The original *Elisabeth* lacked this element, so it had to be specially created for *Erizabēto*, and one major way in which it was created was through the character of Tōto who carries the romance element from the first to the last scene. His status makes him an ideal contender for Erizabēto (as he is even above Emperor Franz-Joseph in terms of status, he is the Emperor of the Underworld). Furthermore, his fight to gain Erizabēto’s love is in direct alignment with the behaviour of Takarazuka’s ideal “men” who also fight to overcome obstacles to be together with the lead female character. Death was an external representation of Elisabeth’s depression which, if preserved in the adaptation, would not allow romance to occur. Death had to be changed into Tōto and become a physical being, so that Erizabēto could have an ideal lover.

As we will recall (from Section 3.2) “fantasy adventure” relies on idealism and emotionality. A woman in love with a figment of her imagination would not have made an ideal heroine because mental illness is not a universal quality that everyone can identify with. Moreover, Elisabeth could not have been able to fight obstacles to be together with her love, since he did not actually exist. The tragedy would have been

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*Departmental Bulletin paper*, The School of Education, Waseda University, pp.37 – 55, p.47 from <http://hdl.handle.net/2065/30197>, last accessed 6/1/2015

<sup>212</sup>Amano 1997 p.160; Watanabe 2010 p.102

conveyed but not the romance. Director Koike explains that his intention for *Erizabēto* was for it to “be in touch with more things from this world” and for Tōto to be a being that can “move the times”.<sup>213</sup> I would posit also that Takarazuka audiences, used to “fantasy adventure” would not have responded positively to something lacking universality and romantic idealism.

Tōto was crucial to the development of the theme of romance, which *Erizabēto* has as main theme. Thus, the Takarazuka version revolves around Tōto’s pursuit of Erizabēto and her eventual acceptance of her own feelings towards him. Unlike in the Viennese original, he is actively involved in the downfall of the House of Habsburg, and, as Rukīni explains Tōto’s behaviour is all for “love”:

“Riyū...?! *Un grande amore! Idai naru ai da!*”

“The reason...?! A great love! It is a magnificent love!”<sup>214</sup>

Considering that Tōto essentially destroys an entire family to get to the woman he loves, he would usually be considered psychotic at best: the very opposite of the romanticism intended to be portrayed. However, by reducing the number of his victims, humanizing him through scenes showing his longing for Erizabēto, and consistently depicting him as Elizabeth’s means to escape from the difficult life she was having, the audience is encouraged to sympathise with him and even wish for his success. Because he is the character which the audience is made to identify so strongly with, they can be considered to be experiencing the entire story through his perspective.

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<sup>213</sup> “...(Y)o no naka zentai to karamu yō ni shite toki ni wa jidai wo ugokasu yō na sonzai ni shōka shitakatta.” Watanabe 2010 p.103

<sup>214</sup> *Erizabēto* (1996), act 1 scene 2. (translation by me) Also see act 1 scene 3: “*Hito ga shi wo ai suru no ka? Da ga, sō de nai to, futari ga musubarenai!*” (“A human to love Death? However, if it had not been so, they could not have been together!”)

Regarding a recent staging of *Elisabeth* (2009),<sup>215</sup> director Koike Shūichirō states:

“I hope he’ll [Tōto] be seen as having a fragile, easily concerned side. I hope that will come out as an appealing part for him. Plus he is a magnificent person anyway.”<sup>216</sup>

Tōto is “magnificent” regardless of the actual events occurring on stage. He is ideal and he is admired not only by the lead female character but also by the audience. This triangle of sorts is repeated and emphasized throughout the show, when Tōto embraces the lead actress but his gaze is directed at the public, directly involving them in the scene.<sup>217</sup>

In the adaptation process, Tōto was established as the main character by altering his title, appearance and prominence in the story: he needed to have his own song, as is typical with Takarazuka lead *otokoyaku*. *Ai to shi no rondo*, as mentioned earlier, was specifically created for this occasion by Kunze and Levay. Interspersed through the scenes, it serves to remind the audience of Tōto’s feelings for Erizabēto. Tōto also has another theme: the first few bars of *Saigo no Dansu* (The Last Dance). This short refrain precedes most of his appearances on stage and serves to highlight his role as the main character, showing him as the force driving the plot. Erizabēto has certain key moments where she can choose her path, but Tōto is there constantly, in the

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<sup>215</sup>As mentioned earlier there are 7 versions of *Erizabēto*. Since an exact copy of Takarazuka’s first *Erizabēto: ai to shi no rondo* adaptation would likely not attract and invite audiences to view it several times, every restaging of it gives a slightly different portrayal of Tōto and Erizabēto. However, I will be focusing on the first adaptation, *Erizabēto* (1996), as mentioned in the first chapter, to limit the scope of this thesis. Further study of later versions, while interesting, is outside this particular research project.

<sup>216</sup>*Kageki*, Number 6, June 2009, p 81

<sup>217</sup>This is typical of all Takarazuka performances, not only *Erizabēto*, but it is important to note because it is a performance feature that the Viennese version did not have.

background, trying to convince her to join him. These musical refrains add to this feeling.

In the original version, Death was made to resemble a young Heinrich Heine, as mentioned earlier. (See figure 1.) He is also intended to be attractive and “erotic”<sup>218</sup> (See figure 3) .The latter aspect would not have melded well with Takarazuka’s imagery and established gender performance style because “fantasy adventure” is specifically focused on the romantic, not on the erotic, as discussed earlier.

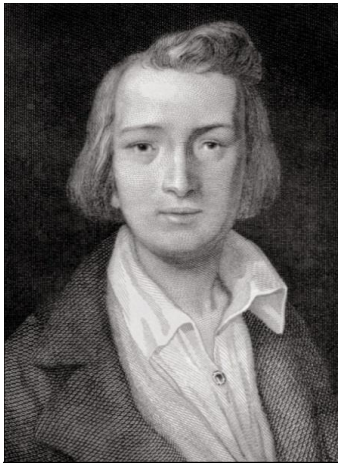


Fig. 2 Heinrich Heine  
(1837)



Fig. 3 Uwe Kröger as Death,  
(1992)

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<sup>218</sup> Rommel 2007, p. 74



Fig. 4 Ichiro Maki as Tōto (Death),  
*Erizabēto* (1996)

Moreover, the resemblance to Heine would not have been relevant to or understood by the Takarazuka audience. In order to be a romantic hero, Death had to be aesthetically attractive in the conventional Takarazuka way.<sup>219</sup> As discussed earlier, this involves a specific kind of “beauty”, defined by exaggeration and gender performance. As we can see from figure 4, Tōto is clearly not fully human, and there is no attempt at making him resemble any known person. The make-up particularly makes the face resemble a mask, thus removing any visual traits of humanity from the face of the performer. This does not preclude the set masculine physical, vocal or socio-linguistic *kata* from being performed, for Tōto is a fantasy hero. The feathers and the richly embellished costume combine with the make-up to create the “otherworldly” image of the character, while establishing his status as Emperor of the Underworld.

Combining these elements with the song *Watashi wo moyasu ai* (The love that burns me), Tōto makes a strong, lasting, and most importantly, romantic entrance and establishes the love between himself and Erizabēto as the focus of the play. *Watashi wo moyasu ai* does not exist only in the Takarazuka version (unlike *Ai to Shi no rondo*, which is unique to Takarazuka). Takarazuka’s version of the song is a relatively close

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<sup>219</sup>In other words, he had to perform the three types of *kata* mentioned before: physical, vocal and socio-linguistic. In doing so, the character would be recognisable to the audience as the typical male hero associated with the established “fantasy adventure” style.



translation of the German version. What differs is the presentation: when this song is sung in *Elisabeth* the half demolished, sinking royal palace behind Death serves as a reminder of the destruction of the Empire, emphasizing the theme of death; in *Erizabēto* the focus of attention is the beplumed, and impressive figure of Tōto himself, emphasizing romance and his position as the main *otokoyaku* character.

Tōto also appears often throughout the show to remind the audience of his feelings for Erizabēto, and his anger and pain at having been rejected, thus constantly arousing the audience's sympathy and reinforcing the theme of romance. In particular in Act 1 Scene 15 we can clearly see Tōto's frustration at Erizabēto's harsh rejection. At the end of the Act 1<sup>220</sup> Erizabēto has gained Franz-Joseph's support, and believes herself to be free. This scene serves to highlight Elisabeth's quest for freedom in the Viennese version, with her strongly standing on her own, while Franz-Joseph professes his love to her. However, in the Takarazuka version the same scene was used to reinforce the romance theme by adding Tōto. While Erizabēto sings about how she belongs to herself, he adds that he loves her and cannot see anyone apart from her.<sup>221</sup> Act 1 finishes with Tōto calling out Erizabēto's name, once again bringing the focus onto his feelings, and thus, the romantic love element of the show.

The pinnacle of the romance comes in the epilogue where at last Erizabēto has come to love Tōto enough to want to forfeit her own life. He welcomes her with open arms and together they sing about never ending love coming at the end of a long journey:

*“Nagai tabiji no hate ni tsukanda,/Kesshite owaru toki nado  
konai/Omae (anata) no ai...”*

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<sup>220</sup>Act 1 Scene 17, *Erizabēto* (1996).

<sup>221</sup>“*Kimi shika mienai...aishiteru! Erizabēto!*” – I can't see anyone but you...I love you! Elisabeth! - *Erizabēto: ai to shi no rondo* (1996) Act 1 Scene 17.

At the end of my long journey I have grasped your love, to which  
an end shall never come...<sup>222</sup>

This is very different from the original ending where Death leaves Elisabeth on the floor and walks away as though he no longer has any need, or love, for her. In this way Tōto in the Takarazuka adaptation foregrounds the love between himself and Erizabēto, creating primarily a story of romance. However, in Takarazuka, the effect of romance is often strengthened by tragedy.

As discussed above, insertion of the word ‘death’ into the title of the play redirects the audience’s attention onto the character Tōto and the element of romance: the show is presented as a dance of love and death. In Act 1 Scene 4, which was specifically created for the Takarazuka version, Tōto appears to establish the premise of the entire musical: his love for Erizabēto and his passionate pursuit of her. This is done through the “meeting” moment between the two, and also through Tōto’s theme song, both which will be discussed at length later in this Chapter, in Section 5.4. This romanticised love-at-first-sight (for Tōto) meeting between Erizabēto and Tōto does not happen at all in the Viennese version, in fact, there is absolutely no interaction between the two, apart from silent glances. The minimal interaction would have been insufficient in creating the element of romance required by Takarazuka.

Another scene which shows Tōto’s importance in the development of the plot is Act 1 Scene 11. In this scene the revolutionary fighters are disheartened by the populace’s overwhelmingly positive reaction to Erizabēto and her beauty. They hate the Empire and resent the Empress for enchanting the people and making them forget about desiring freedom. Tōto comes in to spur their rebellion, and sends them to Vienna.

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<sup>222</sup>*Erizabēto* (1996) Act 2 Scene 15 Epilogue.

*“Hitori no onna ga kuni wo ugokasu zo/Misugosu te wa nai.*

*Yuke! Wīn e! / Yami ga hirogaru, hito wa nanimo shiranai*

*Dareka ga sakebu koe wo tayori ni samayou.”*

A mere woman is moving the entire country!

This is not the time to sit by idly. Onward! To Vienna!

The darkness is spreading, people are unaware.

They wander lost, relying on somebody's screams.

By sending the revolutionaries to Vienna, Tōto is directly involved in starting the revolution which would ultimately result in the decline of the Habsburg Empire and Rudolf's demise. It is clear that Tōto is an active factor in Erizabēto's misfortunes. His actions are meant to convince Erizabēto to admit her feelings for him. In the following scene (Act 1 Scene 14) Tōto makes an appearance once again to work with the revolutionaries in stirring the populace:

*“Nemureru shimin wo okoshite teikoku seifu wo taosō!”*

Wake the sleeping citizens, and let us bring down the imperial  
government!

After appearing in Act 1 Scene 15 to seduce the disillusioned Erizabēto, and being harshly rejected, he crosses into the next scene where he turns the peasants against her. This time he incites them all with Rukīni's help and lines such as:

*“Miruku no furō ni haiteru!/(Dare?! ) Kōgō!*

*Kanojo wo shirashimeyō, shimin no ikari wo!”*

She takes milk baths!<sup>223</sup>/ (Who?! ) The Empress!

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<sup>223</sup>There was a milk shortage at the time, so to take baths in it was not only wasteful, but insulting to the lower class who was struggling.

Let us make known to her the anger of the populace!

By the end of the song Tōto and Rukīni succeed in angering the populace to the point that they threaten to overthrow the monarchy to “create a new era”. At this point Tōto reiterates that “the darkness is spreading”, meaning that his influence has taken root and it is growing; in other words that he is winning. It is important to note that it is Lucheni who stirs the spirits of the populace in the Viennese version, and that there is no reprise. In other words, the show was redesigned to make Lucheni of less consequence (as we will see in Section 5.3), and to redirect the audience’s attention to Tōto’s struggle to win Erizabēto’s love.

In order to restructure the original plot of *Elisabeth* to suit the new storyline of Tōto pursuing Erizabēto for her love, certain scenes were cut and new scenes were added, and the sequence of some scenes was changed in order to better fit the new narrative. In the Takarazuka version, Tōto is essentially “fighting” for Erizabēto's love, so his actions are intended to be excused by the audience because his behaviour is actually for “love”. A true villain could not play the lead of a Takarazuka show since his very existence would be against the dream world that Takarazuka strives to create.

Another scene that was materially altered in order to show Tōto’s influence on the development of the plot was Act 1 Scene 13. Here the death of young princess Sophie is omitted in favour of showing how Erizabēto (and her beauty) charm the Hungarian people and prevent a revolt. This change was necessary for Tōto to come in and send revolutionaries to Vienna highlighting his involvement in the fall of the Habsburg dynasty, and also shifting the focus from Erizabēto to Tōto by giving him a greater role to play than he had in the original.

Tōto's influence is represented by the playing of his appearance theme (*Saigo no Dansu*) even in scenes where he is not physically present, such as Act 2 Scene 4. Here a brothel is brought to Franz-Joseph in the hopes that he will realise that there are other beautiful women apart from Erizabēto, so as to lessen her power over him. Unlike in the original version, in Takarazuka this plot is used by Tōto to drive a wedge between Erizabēto and Franz-Joseph by having Rukīni photograph her husband betraying her, and then himself (Tōto) showing her the photo. When Franz-Joseph is being seduced by the beautiful Madeleine the room goes silent and Tōto's theme plays, hinting at Madeleine's ties with Death. In later versions she is revealed to be one of Tōto's angels.<sup>224</sup>

Thus we can conclude that Tōto's appearances are employed to further the plot, and are crucial to the story, which was not the case with the original. By presenting Tōto as the connecting thread of the narrative, and the hero of the story, Takarazuka guides the gaze of the audience from Erizabēto's misfortunes and tragedies to Tōto's suffering and longing for her love, thus establishing romance as the main theme of Takarazuka's version.

### **5.3 *Erizabēto* and Rukīni – a slightly uncouth gentleman villain**

Another character that was largely altered for Takarazuka's version was the narrator, Lucheni. The most obvious change (in terms of plot) is that in the Takarazuka

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<sup>224</sup>When her name and the name of the performer playing her appears on screen (on the DVD version), the words *Shi no tenshi* (Angel of Death) are added in brackets from the 1997 version onwards

version he is made into Tōto's servant. In this role, he helps Tōto slowly destroy Erizabēto's life, turning people against her, aiding the revolutionaries and lastly killing her (while constantly reminding us how horrible her life is, making Tōto's love sound like the better option). The way in which he fulfils both the role of narrator and instigator is vastly different from his Viennese counterpart. The Viennese Lucheni is uncouth, disrespectful, and clearly mad; a free agent, mainly there to tell the audience the secrets about Elisabeth that history has forgotten. In the Prologue (Act 1 Scene 1) he talks about how Elisabeth wanted to die because she loved death, and that's why he killed her. Considering that in this version Death is a figment of Elisabeth's imagination, Lucheni's bold and strange statements present him as a mad person from the beginning.

However, in the Japanese version we see that the same statement about Erizabēto wanting to die is verified by Tōto's appearance, making Rukīni not actually mad. Furthermore, we can see that Rukīni is not at all independent, or dedicated to expressing disdain for the monarchy. He is, instead, a subordinate of Tōto's who helps the "romantic love" element come to a happy ending. We can see his subordination first in the Prologue of Act 1, where he asks Tōto's permission to talk before he explains himself to the judges. The connection between the two is reinforced particularly strongly in Act 2 Scene 14 when Tōto relinquishes the dagger that will be used to kill Erizabēto to him. Once more we are reminded that it is Tōto who is in control and he has been from the very beginning, which is in complete contrast to the original where Lucheni simply has the murder weapon on him.

By sanitising the character of Lucheni, the political satire and disdain for the monarchy and the Emperor and Empress is considerably diminished, allowing instead for the attention of the audience to focus on the romantic aspects of the story.

Particularly of interest is the multi-national collage<sup>225</sup> used as the lyrics for the song *Kitsch!* In the Viennese version, Lucheni talks here about how, despite her popularity, Elisabeth was an unpleasant woman who abandoned her son and was emotionally cold. Such character flaws would have been unacceptable for a Takarazuka heroine, so instead we have the focus on her beauty. Rukīni announces that Erizabēto used her power to gain photos of the most beautiful girls from around the world, to whom she would compare herself knowing that her beauty would eventually fade, and with it, her power.<sup>226</sup>

Despite being a villain, Rukīni is still an *otokoyaku* and, as such, must adhere to the rules of performance that govern that role, that is, he must still perform the physical, socio-linguistic, and vocal *kata*. Thus, during the adaptation process Lucheni undergoes a change in terms of how he expresses himself and behaves on stage. The original Lucheni calls himself an anarchist, swears repeatedly<sup>227</sup> and spits, intentionally portraying a mad man with no regard for society or etiquette. A faithful portrayal would have been incongruent with Takarazuka's fantasy adventure so Rukīni plays an anarchist in name, but is a typical Takarazuka character in every other respect. A typical Takarazuka villain is an antagonist to the hero and heroine, but still portrays a beautiful,

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<sup>225</sup>*Erizabēto* (1996) Act 2 Scene 1.

<sup>226</sup>During *Kitsch*, girls from many countries such as Spain, Netherlands, the US, and Japan appear and dance behind Lucheni. The girls' countries are instantly recognisable by the use of stereotypical signs associated with the respective countries, such as a flamenco dress for Spain, a kimono for Japan and the Statue of Liberty for the United States. The use of stereotypes and well-known symbols, as discussed earlier, allows the audience to "travel" to those places and enjoy the element of the "foreign" and "exotic". It also romanticises Erizabēto's situation, focusing on her desire to look young and beautiful. It humanises her, and allows the audience to empathize with her, which is the polar opposite of the effect of Lucheni's words in the original version.

<sup>227</sup>Act 1 Scenes 1, 8, and 12; Act 2 Scenes 1, 3 and 10.

idealised, “man” based on Takarazuka’s usual *kata*.

Moreover Rukīni had to perform in a way which would not shock or disturb the audience, hence no spitting, excessive swearing or uncouthness. It is important to note that although swearwords are not excluded from Takarazuka, and are sometimes used for effect, the rawness of some of Lucheni’s more colourful phrases would have been both very difficult to translate, and shocking to the audience since excessive and very explicit swearing is not commonly used as part of the socio-linguistic *kata*. Thus, Rukīni’s manner of talking is much softer in the Takarazuka version.

As seen above, in keeping with his role, Rukīni is presented as “mad” but must still adhere to *otokoyaku* rules. Thus, he is still attractive in the established *otokoyaku* way. His “madness” is represented through his unkempt hair, although, it must be noted that his outfits are spotless. This enables him fit into the dream world by not being too visually offensive. In addition, the *otokoyaku* playing this role will use the vocal *kata* to suggest madness, through uneven intonation, and shifts between quietness and loudness, particularly coupled with unhinged laughter, but only very occasionally, specifically at the beginning and at the end of the show. Before the Prologue (Act 2 Scene 17), after he has stabbed Erizabēto and has begun cackling madly, he repeats his original statement “*un grande amore*” (a great love): something that the Viennese Lucheni does not do. This is important to note because it reminds us once more of Rukīni’s role as an assistant to Erizabēto and Tōto’s love.

Thus we can conclude that the “takarazulization” process has produced a Rukīni who differs greatly from the original Lucheni, who spat, swore, made rude gestures and innuendo, and was independent. Indeed, it could be said that he is not cast as a true villain in *Erizabēto*, since his role is mainly to aid Tōto in winning the love of Erizabēto,



and although he appears in the same scenes as the Viennese Lucheni, his role is considerably less negative and antagonistic.

#### **5.4 *Erizabēto* plot changes and the theme of romantic love**

As discussed previously, romantic love (*ren'ai*) is an intrinsic aspect of Takarazuka's "fantasy adventure". It follows, therefore, that *Elisabeth* had to be altered so that a strong element of romantic love united the individual scenes of the empress' life. Moreover, the story, which relied a lot on Austro-Hungarian history, had to be simplified for Japanese audiences which would have been unfamiliar with the political situation of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Austria. Moreover the political aspects would have been largely unsuitable for Takarazuka's "fantasy adventure" which, as we have seen, requires romance and sentimentality. For these reasons Takarazuka's version had to focus on the element of romance. This was achieved in several steps. First through the alteration of the title, as mentioned earlier, into *Erizabēto: ai to shi no rondo*, which instantly recalibrates the audience's attention and focuses it on romance. Secondly, as mentioned in section 5.2, the *ren'ai* element is reinforced by making the principal character of Tōto fight for Erizabēto's affection, and their love the main focus of the plot

As shown earlier, Tōto is made the main character and his love for Erizabēto is the driving force of the plot. The most important change is the addition of the love song to Act 1 Scene 4 where Erizabēto and Tōto first meet. In the original version (Act 1 Scene 3), Death is shown carrying an unconscious Elisabeth to her bed and leaving.

Elisabeth then wakes up and tells her mother never to try and find her a husband because she wants to be free, while staring at Death. The connection between Death and Elisabeth is only alluded to, and not clearly shown. Takarazuka has added an extra scene showing interaction between Tōto and Erizabēto: Act 1 Scene 4: the first encounter between the two. She is brought to Tōto by his angels after she falls from a high place. He welcomes her into the Underworld, and Erizabēto asks him to return her to her world. At that moment Tōto staggers away, shocked by her beauty. He then begins singing about how her eyes “pierce” him and “melt” his “icy heart”.<sup>228</sup> This marks the beginning of the theme of romance that will be present throughout the whole show. In order to establish the romance element of the play it was also important that there would be love at first sight, in keeping up with the traditional Takarazuka romantic relationship model. For this reason, and also in keeping with the lead *otokoyaku* role, Tōto needed a romantic theme song detailing his feelings for Elisabeth.

*“Sono hitomi wa mune wo kogashi/ manazashi wa tsuki sasaru*

*Iki sae mo ore wo torare/Kotta kokoro tokasu*

*Tada no shōjo no hazu na no ni/ Ore no subete ga kuzureru*

*Tatta hitori no ningen na no ni/ Ore wo furue saseru”*

Those eyes burn my heart/Your gaze pierces me

You take away even my breath/You melt my frozen heart

You should be just a girl and yet/I am falling entirely apart

You are supposed to be just a human and still/You make me  
tremble.

These lyrics describe just how powerful love is, and how even the Emperor of the

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<sup>228</sup>Erizabēto 1996, Act 1 Scene 4

Underworld can fall prisoner to his strong love for Erizabēto. This song also establishes Tōto as his own character rather than a figment of Erizabēto's imagination<sup>229</sup> through the following lyrics:

*“Omae no inochi ubau kawari/ Ikita omae ni aisaretai n da.”*

Instead of stealing your life/ I want to be loved by the living you

*Ai to shi no rondo* also establishes an obstacle in the way of Tōto's love, namely that it is forbidden:

*“Kinjirareta ai no tabū ni/ Ore wa ima fumidasu”*

I am stepping toward/The *taboo* of forbidden love

His lover being alive is one of the obstacles that this love has to overcome in order to achieve a happy ending.

The romance theme is reinforced also by the relationship between Franz-Joseph and Erizabēto. He too falls in love at first sight with her, owing to her beauty:<sup>230</sup>

*“Mogitate no furūtsu, fuesshu de.../Hitomi wa āmondo de*

*Ichigo no kuchibiru...”*

She is like just-ripened fruit, so fresh.../Her eyes are like  
almonds/Strawberry lips...

Although this above section is mostly a direct translation from the original German, in the Japanese version it is building upon the viewer's perception of Erizabēto's beauty which has been established through Tōto's song in the Takarazuka version. The poetic words Franz-Joseph uses only serve to heighten the romanticism of the scene and emphasise Erizabēto's beauty. He is also charmed by her free-spirit. Although he does

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<sup>229</sup>Amano, 2009, p. 41

<sup>230</sup>*Erizabēto* (1996) Act 1 Scene 6

not voice this specifically, it is apparent from the facial expressions. The use of the word “fresh” is also likely a description of her attitude rather than her looks. For Franz-Joseph who was accustomed to people entrenched in formality, Erizabēto’s free spirit must have seemed “fresh” indeed. The romance is continued in Act 1 Scene 6 where the newly engaged Erizabēto and Franz-Joseph talk alone for the first time and conclude that as long as they have each other, they will be alright:

*“Anata ga iru nara/ Arashi mo kowaku wa nai”*

If you are here/ Even storms will not make me fear.

Unlike its German counterpart, this scene has Erizabēto mainly listening to Franz-Joseph describing the hardships of being emperor and the trials that await them before stating that together they can overcome anything. The Takarazuka version eliminates Elisabeth’s replies that in the original speak of freedom and counter each of Franz-Joseph’s warnings, ending on how together they can overcome everything. This arguably could be because of time constraints, as mentioned earlier, but it must also be noted that it is typical for the *otokoyaku* to have more singing numbers or more lines in a duet number because, as we will recall, Takarazuka is *otokoyaku*-centric.

Romance is emphasised again when Tōto comes to seduce Erizabēto in Act 1 Scene 15. Here Erizabēto is enraged at Sophie’s cruel treatment of young Prince Rudolf, and gives Franz-Joseph an ultimatum: to choose either herself or his mother. Tōto appears after Franz-Joseph retires, to entice Erizabēto to come to his world with him and sings:<sup>231</sup>

*“Erizabēto nakanaide,/Oyasumi, watashi no ude no naka de”*

Elisabeth, do not cry/Come rest within my arms

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<sup>231</sup>*Erizabēto* (1996) Act 1 Scene 15

The tenderness of the moment is disrupted by Erizabēto's abrupt refusal just as she is on the brink of accepting Tōto's kiss. She shifts the emphasis from romance to freedom and personal choice through the following words:

*“Iya yo nigenai wa/Akirameru ni wa hayai/Ikite sae ireba*

*Jiyū ni nareru wa/Dettete! Anata ni wa tayloranai!”*

No I will not run/ It is too soon to give in/ If I just live,

I will find my freedom!/ Away! I will not rely on you!

Tōto's repeated invitations to Erizabēto and her staunch refusals become a pattern for the musical,<sup>232</sup> alluding to the title: “The *rondo* of love and death”. It is a cycle that can only be broken when Erizabēto admits her love for Tōto, thereby ending his pursuit. In other words, the cycle will be broken when love triumphs in the end, which as we know, is a crucial part of Takarazuka's “fantasy adventure” aesthetic. Thus, by having love triumph at the end, that is, by having Erizabēto fall in love with Tōto, Takarazuka aligned *Erizabēto* with its existing repertoire of romance-focused stories.

The theme of romance is present throughout most of the play, particularly wherever Tōto and Erizabēto meet. Thus, in their meeting after Erizabēto's wedding to Franz-Joseph, Tōto warns her of that he will dance with her last, that it is her destiny to dance with him and that he will have the last word.<sup>233</sup> He also talks about how he is fighting the emperor for her love, and that her love for the emperor is not true.<sup>234</sup> Although a similar idea is presented in the German language musical, Erizabēto's

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<sup>232</sup>See Act 2 Scenes 5 and 12 of *Erizabēto* (1996). In the latter scene it is Tōto who rejects Erizabēto because she does not love him and he desires her love.

<sup>233</sup>*Erizabēto* (1996) Act 1 Scene 9 “*Omae wa ore to odoru sadame!*”- Your destiny is to dance with me!

<sup>234</sup>*Erizabēto* (1996) –Act 1 Scene 9 “*Futari no ai wa misekake/ Heika no ude ni dakarete/ Anata wa sotto watashi ni mo/ Hohoemi kakete iru*” (Your love is a sham/ While you are in the emperor's arms/ You also smile softly at me).

response is completely different in the Takarazuka version. While here she is alone and denying any feelings towards Tōto, in the Viennese musical she is manipulated like a puppet by him, showing how powerless she is. With such an imbalance of power romance cannot occur and so, in the Takarazuka version, although Tōto sings almost a complete translation of *Der Letzte Tanz* (The Last Dance), he is tender (by comparison) in his approach to Elisabeth, and is clearly trying to seduce her. This song sets the beginning of the trials that love has to overcome in order for Tōto and Erizabēto to gain their ‘happily ever after’.

In the Viennese version, Death dances with Elisabeth, and she is clearly attracted to him, with Franz-Joseph as an afterthought that she then clings to throughout Death’s song. Thus, it is made clear that Elisabeth longed for Death from the beginning, and Death’s words echo this:

You’ve turned away (from me) but only in pretence.

You want to be loyal to him, but you invite me.

But in his arms you are smiling at me<sup>235</sup>

By contrast, in the Takarazuka version Erizabēto tries to run away from Tōto and is indignant when he accuses her of cheating on Franz-Joseph by smiling at him.<sup>236</sup> Moreover she appears completely terrified listening to Tōto sing about how she is destined to dance with him. Her fear is further clarified at the end of Scene 9 where she runs to Franz-Joseph and asks him to protect her.<sup>237</sup> This is important to note because it establishes that Erizabēto, at this point, does not love Tōto, and highlights the need for

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<sup>235</sup> “*Du hast dich abgewendet, doch nur zum Schein/ .Du willst ihm treu sein, doch du lädst mich ein/ Noch in seinen Armen lächelst du mir zu.*”

<sup>236</sup>She interjects “*Uso yo!*” (Lies!)

<sup>237</sup>Erizabēto (1996) Act 1 Scene 9 “*Watashi wo omamori kudasai!*”

Tōto to win Erizabēto's love in order for the happy ending to be achieved. Thus, the theme of romance is strongly reinforced through this scene. Act 1 Scene 10, where Erizabēto sings *Watashi dake ni* (Only to myself) was also altered to reinforce the romance theme. In the Viennese version Elisabeth uses this song to express her wish for freedom. In the Takarazuka version, Tōto appears and repeats his theme, shifting the emphasis back onto romance, and his love for Erizabēto. This scene will be discussed at length in Section 5.5.

Romance is reiterated in the Act 1 Scene 17, where Erizabēto feels she has at last gained her freedom because Franz-Joseph has chosen her over his mother. Although it originally starts with focus on the theme of freedom,<sup>238</sup> Tōto's appearance (on the *ginkyō*<sup>239</sup>) and anguished song shift the focus onto romance once more, specifically on his love for Erizabēto.

“*Omae ni inochi yurushita tame ni/ Ikiru imi wo mitsukete  
shimatta/Kimi shika mienai...Aishiteru! Erizabēto!*”

Because I've spared your life/ You have discovered the meaning  
of living/ I cannot see anyone but you...I love you! Erizabēto!

The shift in focus from Erizabēto's triumphant reprise of *Watashi dake ni* (Only to myself) to Tōto's song (a prelude of *Boku wa mama no kagami dakara* – Because I am mother's mirror), particularly with the emphasis placed on the “I love you” and the cry of Erizabēto's name, reminds the audience of Tōto's longing for Erizabēto, thereby

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<sup>238</sup>Erizabēto: “*Okotoba ureshiku ukagaimashita/ Heika to tomo ni ayunde mairimasu/ Tada watashi no jinsei wa/ Watashi no mono* – I am grateful to hear your words. I will walk together with your Highness. However my life is my own.

<sup>239</sup>The apron stage around the orchestra pit – see page 70

reinforcing the theme of romance.

We can see that the theme of romance permeates the musical in much the same way that the theme of freedom does in the original German-language version. The shift in the “takarazukalization” process from Erizabēto’s quest for freedom to Tōto’s quest for Erizabēto’s love is crucial to fulfilling Takarazuka’s established performance style. It allows the show to become *otokoyaku*-centric, while also making it possible for the audience to sympathise with him. Erizabēto’s fight for freedom would not have translated well, particularly since *musumeyaku* are supposed to be secondary to *otokoyaku*, there to support and not to lead, and, secondly, because they are expected to be innocent, naïve, “feminine” and, just like the hero, willing to do everything in their power to overcome obstacles in order to “win” true love. In this respect Erizabēto is interesting, because she is a strong female character, who, although beginning innocent, grows bitter, abandons her husband, and rejects her child. These actions in particular are not consistent with the model of ideal femininity that *musumeyaku* are intended to portray. Having the theme of romance as the main focus, and changing Elisabeth’s character materially, to make her a lonely, but loving woman who was betrayed and hurt, and simply made mistakes, serves to realign her more closely to the *musumeyaku* ideal, although, her strong wish for independence still does not fit neatly within it.

In the original Viennese version, Elisabeth approaches Death, he kisses her, stealing her life, then leaves her body on the floor and walks away in a visual representation of the lyrics of the Prologue “Everyone dances with Death but no-one with Elisabeth”. This ending serves to highlight the futility of her restless search for freedom and show how her loneliness did not end with her life. Such an ending would have been inappropriate for “fantasy adventure”. Because of this in the Epilogue of



*Erizabēto*, Tōto has earned Erizabēto's love, and she eagerly and happily runs to him. They embrace and he kisses her hand. Most importantly they are both visibly happy as the platform raises them up to the Other World (Tōto's domain). This is combined with both Erizabēto and Tōto singing a reprise of *Ai to Shi no Rondo*, that stresses their feelings for one another as real, powerful and "never ending".<sup>240</sup> As mentioned earlier, Takarazuka often stages deaths of main characters in order to heighten the sentimental aspect of "fantasy adventure", however, romance is always strongly involved and with either one or both lovers dying. Thus, a main character dying without the romance element being present would not have fitted Takarazuka's performance style. For this reason, no doubt, the ending was altered to one which exudes romance.

Tōto's pursuit of Erizabēto carries the show and the theme of romance, ensuring at once that the *otokoyaku* is established as, and remains, the focus of the show; and that the theme of romance is reinforced throughout. The theme of romance is present both at the beginning and the end of the show, creating a sense of completion. The diminishment of the other themes from the original *Elisabeth* in favour of the theme of romance as well as the changes in Elisabeth's character, serve to make it more suitable for Takarazuka's performing style.

#### **5.4 *Erizabēto* and the theme of "freedom"**

The theme of "freedom" in Takarazuka is also made to fit the "fantasy adventure", using new, and considerably altered scenes from the original. This concept

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<sup>240</sup>*Erizabēto*, 1996 Act 2 Scene 15 Epilogue. "Kesshite owaru toki nado konai anata no ai."

is recalibrated to suit Takarazuka's idea of "freedom": namely, the ability to travel freely and experience new sights. The Viennese approach to "freedom" is about absolute unrestraint encompassing freedom to travel and see new places, but also to live as one pleases, unburdened by societal constrictions. This is represented through the song *Wie Du* which will be discussed at length later in this section. Takarazuka begins the theme of "freedom" from the very first appearance of Erizabēto's character.<sup>241</sup> It is reflected in the poem she writes and recites (a poem that was specifically created for the Takarazuka version):

*"Tori no yō ni jiyū ni sora wo kake/ Eien no ao no tenkū wo ikeru  
nara/Watashi yorokobi no uchi ni home tataeyō/Jiyū to iu na no  
kami wo!"*

If I could traverse the unending blue heavens/To fly through the  
sky freely, as a bird does/Then I would joyously praise/the god  
called "freedom!"

It is important to note that this poem does not exist in the Viennese version, because this poem highlights the "takarazukalized" approach to freedom. Erizabēto longs for the freedom to fly "as a bird does", a phrase that alludes to travelling. Shifting the focus from being completely free to be yourself, to being free to travel removes the element of societal restrictions that is apparent in the original Viennese, where already at fifteen Elisabeth was beginning to feel stifled by formalities. She sings:<sup>242</sup>

Mama has guests today, it will be awful!/Stiff collars, stupid  
questions, hypocrisy./Oh, I wish I could shirk from the gossip and

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<sup>241</sup>*Erizabēto* (1996) Act 1 Scene 2

<sup>242</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 2

the pretense,/But the governess will not let me.

Father, why can I not come with you?/ Everything you enjoy I  
almost like more/ Dreaming, or writing poems, or riding with the  
wind/ I'd like to be like you just once! Why am I not allowed up  
the cherry tree again today?/ Or to practice balancing on the rope/  
Or to run around with my brothers on the meadow behind the  
house?/ No, the governess won't let me [go] outside.

Father, why can't I go with you?/ To Egypt, Spain or Kathmandu./  
Live free like a gypsy with a zither under my arm./ Only doing  
what I want, and wanting what I do./ I'd like to be like you for a  
change.

We can see here that Elisabeth was essentially bound by societal rules and expectations into being someone who was the opposite of her real character, and that she despised formalities. This is very different from Erizabēto who mentions nothing of “hypocrisy”, “gossip”, “pretense” or the governess denying her her favourite activities. This difference is emphasised later, when Erizabēto talks to her father. Here also there has been a large change from the original, because their relationship is presented in a more positive light, and the increased interaction between them creates a more romanticised approach to her longing for freedom. Where Elisabeth's father is more detached, Erizabēto's father embraces her, is playful, and is actively involved in the conversation. Moreover, their duet is more balanced making Erizabēto sound more like an innocent, dreamy 15 year old, rather than a 15 year old who was sad and frustrated at being forbidden from doing everything she liked. This effect was achieved by changing the lyrics about what she was not allowed to do in general to “today I wasn't allowed to

climb trees or practice walking on the rope.”<sup>243</sup> By restraining her freedom only slightly, Takarazuka is able to shift the focus from her disappointment and frustration at the lack of freedom, to the longing of a young girl to travel to foreign lands; something that the audience can understand and more easily relate to. Erizabēto adds:

“(…)*Jiyū ni ikitai/ Jipushī no yō ni*”

“(…) I want to live in freedom/ Like a gypsy does”

The usage of the word “gypsy” is key here. It is a direct translation of the German, but for the audience it would also have invoked images of beautiful travelers, as “gypsies” are usually portrayed in Takarazuka.<sup>244</sup> Therefore we can assume that the word “gypsy” is materially important to the crafting of the image Takarazuka is trying to create because it helps romanticise it.

While the theme of freedom is thus still represented in the Takarazuka rendition of *Elisabeth*, it is strongly sentimentalized. As seen above, Erizabēto is not a young girl restrained by society; she is a young girl with big dreams, who is only marginally inconvenienced by her position in society. The focus shifts from a fight for freedom to freedom of spirit. This is emphasised once again in Act 1 Scene 6 when Erizabēto breaks etiquette in ways the Emperor finds charming. What is also emphasised here is Erizabēto’s youth and innocence, both of which are key elements to the portrayal of a

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<sup>243</sup> “*Kyō wa kinobori ga kinshi na no, tsunawatari no renshū mo.*

*Otōto tachi to wa sākasugokko ga dekiru*

*Katei kyōshi no me wo nusumi.*”

Today tree climbing was forbidden, as was practicing walking on the rope

I can play “circus” with my brothers

I did it behind the tutor’s back

<sup>244</sup>See for example Takarazuka’s staging of *The Gypsy Baron* (2010), *Dance Romanesque* (2011), *Gekijō* (the retelling of the opera *Carmen*) (1998, 2010)

romantic feminine ideal in Takarazuka's fantasy adventure, as previously explained.

The theme of “freedom” evolves throughout the show, just as it does in the Viennese *Elisabeth*, with many of the same scenes, including Franz-Joseph's demonstrations of obedience to his mother, and Erizabēto's scenes of defiance. What differs is the presence of Tōto in most of these scenes, where he was originally absent. Thus, in *Watashi dake ni*<sup>245</sup> (“Only to myself”: the Japanese version of *Ich gehör nur mir* [I belong only to myself]), for example, the focus shifts from the theme of freedom to the theme of romance upon Tōto's appearance and the subsequent reprise of *Ai to shi no rondo*. In this way Erizabēto's quest for freedom is perpetually diminished to accommodate for the focus on Tōto's fight for her love. Adding Tōto in key scenes to do with “freedom” served two purposes, 1) to establish him as the main character (as mentioned earlier); and 2) to shift the focus from the original theme portrayed in the respective scenes, to the theme of “romantic love”, aligning it with Takarazuka's established performance style. The theme of “freedom” is, in this way, diminished to allow for the expansion of the theme of “romantic love”, and also to remove the elements of tragedy that would have been dissonant with Takarazuka's performance style.

### **5.5 Erizabēto: fantasy and romanticised tragedy**

As outlined above, the entire “takarazukalization” process involved softening' the characters and removing or altering elements that could be interpreted as grotesque

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<sup>245</sup>*Erizabēto* (1996) Act 1 Scene 11

or disturbing. For this reason we are not shown Rukīni's body hanging from the ceiling while his "dead spirit" is interrogated by the judges in Act 1 Scene 1 as we see in the original musical.

Likewise, in the first song, *Warera wa iki taeshi mono domo* (We are those who have stopped breathing), Erizabēto's family speaks of how she was very shy and guarded, while her son sings about being left alone. In the Viennese version Lucheni sings most of the song, adding that Elisabeth "despised" them (her family, and the people at the palace) and hated life at the palace. Elisabeth's mother sings that Elisabeth has been cursed, and has "a shadow on her soul".<sup>246</sup> It is also of note that the original song revolves around the phrase "everyone dances with Death, but no-one with Elisabeth"<sup>247</sup> poignantly expressing the idea that in death she was as lonely as in life (because Death, like everyone else, left her). In the Takarazuka version, this phrase was replaced with: "A truth nobody knows; that love which no-one knows of,"<sup>248</sup> thereby lightening the tone and shifting the emphasis onto romance. In this way can see from the very first moments that the atmosphere has been tailored to a more romantic, less dark aesthetic.

The sentimentalised and idealised approach continues throughout the ensuing scenes, taking a noticeably different direction from the original in Act 1 Scene 7 as mentioned previous in Section 5.3. The original Viennese uses this scene as a way to foreshadow Elisabeth and Franz-Joseph's impending difficulties owing to their different personalities. In the Takarazuka version, most of Erizabēto's dialogue is cut in favour of having Franz-Joseph warn her about the trials and duties of royal life. In addition to

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<sup>246</sup>Elisabeth 1992, Act 1 Scene 1 "*Alle tanzen mit dem Tod*" (Everyone dances with Death)

<sup>247</sup>"*Alle tanzten mit dem Tod doch niemand mit Elisabeth.*"

<sup>248</sup>"*Dare mo shiranai shinjitsu Erizabēto/Dare mo shiranai sono ai Erizabēto*"

assuming a lesser role in this scene, Erizabēto also appears much more innocent, and naïve compared to her Viennese counterpart. These adaptations are in-keeping with the typical portrayal and role of female characters in Takarazuka who are not only presented as innocent, but also as secondary to the *otokoyaku*.

Another scene where there has clearly been a shift from the original version to reflect a more Takarazuka-esque approach is in Act 2 Scene 3: Erizabēto's encounter with Madame Windisch, who believes herself to be the Empress. In the Viennese version, Elisabeth confronts Madame Windisch and states she, herself, is the Empress, which provokes Madame Windisch to attack her. The patient is taken away in a straitjacket, laughing madly, and Elisabeth begins to sing how she would rather be that woman because she is only restrained by her strait-jacket while her spirit is free. She also sings about all she has sacrificed to earn nothing at all, hence the name of the song *Gar nichts* (Nothing at all).<sup>249</sup>

I wish I were like you in a strait jacket rather than a corset! / Your  
strings tie your body,/my strings tie my soul./I have fought and  
pretended to be strong/and what do I have?/ Nothing, nothing at

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<sup>249</sup>This song has been lengthened in the ten-year anniversary special to three verses and a bridge to further stress the Empress' difficult and tragic life and the loneliness and frustration she felt in having to continue living it. It is this version that Watanabe (2010) refers to in his analysis of the song (pp.62-63). He correctly notes that Elisabeth had the choice to go mad or kill herself in order to attain her freedom, and this strengthens and hastens her move towards Death, something that had not been made as clear in the original 1992 Viennese version.

The lyrics are as follows:

*“Ich wollt ich wäre wirklich du/ In der Zwangsjacke statt im Korsett  
Dir schnür'n sie nur den Körper ein/Mir fesselt man die Seele  
Ich habe gekämpft /Und mir alles erträgt  
Und was hab ich erreicht? /Nichts, nichts, gar nichts”*

all.

The song adds to the sense of powerlessness and the feeling of being trapped that the audience can see plague Elisabeth. The scene devolves into a play of light and shadows, angry dancing, and cacophonous exclamations. At the end we see the guard push to the ground the semi-conscious body of the woman who thought herself Elisabeth. The powerful dancing, combined with the lighting effects (which will be discussed at length in chapter 6) creates a dark atmosphere which, I would suggest, is a symbolic representation of Elisabeth's depression. The performance of mental illness in a realistic manner, as well as the anger exhibited in this scene combined with the complete lack of compassion particularly shown at the end, where one of the guards throws Madame Windisch's limp body onto the ground (a foreshadowing of Death's actions towards Elisabeth), would not have fitted into Takarazuka's normal performance style, which is why I suggest it was changed.

By contrast, in the 1996 Takarazuka version, there is a sense of gentleness in the way Erizabēto approaches Madame Windisch. She embraces her, and at the end gives her her own bouquet, helping perpetuate the woman's delusion. Madame Windisch walks away happy in her belief that she is the real Empress. By giving her the bouquet, Erizabēto makes Madame Windisch happy and allows her to enjoy her freedom, that is, her madness. Takarazuka deliberately plays on the juxtaposition between Erizabēto and Madame Windisch as a way to help the audience feel compassion for Erizabēto's situation, by portraying her as a helpless,



trapped, lonesome woman. In Takarazuka's version of Elisabeth's song, she expresses how she would trade places with Madame Windisch if it would help ease her loneliness.

*“Moshi kawareru nara, kawatteru ii no yo/ Watashi no kodoku ni  
taerareru nara/Ah! Anata no tamashī wa jiyū da wa./ Sō yo.  
Jiyū!/Ah! Watashi no tamashī wa tabi wo tsuzuketeru/sokubaku  
sareta mama./Anata no hō ga jiyū.”*

If I could change places with you, I would;/if it helped me  
overcome my loneliness./Oh! your spirit is free!/That's right.  
Free!/ Oh! Even if my soul will continue its travels,/it will be  
bound as it is./ Yours is free.

These lyrics, which do not exist in the original version, sentimentalise Erizabēto's situation. The focus of the scene is her sadness rather than the grief and anger that are highlighted in the Viennese musical. As we have seen, the original *Gar nichts* (Nothing at all) has a stronger focus of despair and tragedy. Compounded with the ensuing cacophony, strobe lights and interpretative dancing<sup>250</sup> presenting a stylised representation of madness and depression, the same scene in *Elisabeth* becomes uncomfortably realistic and dark. As noted earlier, Takarazuka is not entirely devoid of dark, realistic, or unpleasant moments.<sup>251</sup> However, they carefully avoid making the

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<sup>250</sup>Interpretive dancing is a mode of dancing which uses abstract movements to depict the object of a song, a person or an idea. – Dwiggin, Rose Reeves, “One Step at a Time for Show Choirs”, *Music Educators Journal* Vol. 70, No. 6 (Feb., 1984) , pp. 41-45, Sage Publications, Inc. on behalf of MENC: The National Association for Music Education; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3400792> pp. 42 last accessed 6/1/2015

<sup>251</sup>See for example Takarazuka's performance of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, (2013) which begins with a highly stylised whipping and branding scene (the stage goes completely dark before the actual branding, so it is suggestive rather than explicit); *Jin* (2012) which stylises the murder of one of the characters by

audience feel overwhelmingly discomforted through an overly close likeness to reality or through unsettling, uncomfortable, overly-realistic content.

The changes made to this scene in the Takarazuka version allow the audience to sympathise with Elisabeth's sadness rather than feel her anger. While the scene also reinforces Elisabeth's quest for freedom in keeping with the original, it makes the audience admire her for her kindness towards Madame Windisch. This is completely opposite to the Viennese version, where Lucheni constantly tries to rouse the audience's dislike and contempt for Elisabeth; and where Elisabeth's own actions reveal her arrogance and her egoism. These are character traits that would not ideally be associated with a Takarazuka heroine, hence the need for alteration here.

A look at the scenes that were cut reveals that, although crucial to the original, they were superfluous to the Takarazuka version, with its heightened focus on romance. An example of this is Act 2 Scene 10: *Hass* (Hate)<sup>252</sup>. Here we are shown the political conflicts that were haunting Austria at that time. It also contains an unsettling re-enactment of the breakdown in the social classes and the segregation of the ethnicities, as well as the increased disdain for those of Jewish descent. The scene culminates in a chorus of "Race! Mass! Splendour!" ending with "Sieg heil", the infamous Nazi salute. The anger of the people feeling slighted by their leaders is reflected in such lyrics as:

"Hate and violence to those not like us/ Those who make  
themselves at home here/ Chase them away!"

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having red streamers burst out when they get "cut"; and *Phantom* (2002, 2006, 2010) where one of the murder of one characters is a stylised throat cutting, and the only other murder is represented through a scream and the stage going dark.

<sup>252</sup>Watanabe Y. 2008, p.47

(...)

The judge must be a Jew!/ Swine!”<sup>253</sup>

Such strong, disturbing lyrics would have been in direct conflict with Takarazuka’s established “dream” aesthetic. Takarazuka has dealt with revolutions before<sup>254</sup> but they have largely focused on the hero’s success, and other issues which are agreeable to the audience, such as fighting for freedom from oppression, and equality.

The “takarazukalized” scenes serve the purpose of aligning *Elisabeth* with Takarazuka’s specific performance style, and they are crucial to this analysis. As we have seen in section 5.2, Tōto’s presence permeates every scene, constantly reminding the audience that he is the principal character and that he is fighting for Erizabēto’s love. The theme of romance, and romantic tragedy, are thus continuously presented to the audience, and repeatedly reinforced, as we will-see more clearly in the next section. The theme of “freedom” has been diminished considerably, in favour of the development of the theme of “romantic love”. Moreover, the plot has been simplified to be better suited to Takarazuka audiences, through both the addition of key scenes and subtraction of scenes which would have been inappropriate or unsuited for “fantasy adventure”. The character of Tōto was thoroughly developed into a main, ideal, character suitable for Takarazuka’s specific performance style while Erizabēto’s role was reduced to allow for Tōto’s increased appearances and to match a typical *musumeyaku* lead role. Rukīni has also undergone changes, moving him from mad anarchist, to a character that belongs in

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<sup>253</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 2 Scene 9

“Haß und Gewalt denen, die nicht sind wie wir!/ und die sich breitmachen hier, jagt sie davon!

(...)

Der Richter muß ein Jude sein !/ Ein Schwein!”

<sup>254</sup>See, for example *Berusaifu no Bara* (1990, 2000, 2006, 2012).

“fantasy adventure”, and aids the main character to achieve a happy ending. Overall the story itself, was drastically altered to fit within Takarazuka’s particular performance style which revolves around romance and sentimentality.

## Chapter 6

In reference to Takarazuka, the phrase “fantasy adventure”, as we have discussed, encompasses a range of elements: both thematic and physical. With the thematic aspects of *Erizabēto* established, we will now look at aspects of the performance concerned with the physical and visual expression of the themes and ideas, through lighting, scenery and wardrobe choices.

### 6.1 Lighting and scenery

Lighting and scenery are vital in the construction of stage atmosphere and mood, and in the reinforcement of the themes expressed through the movements and words by the characters. The lighting in the Viennese *Elisabeth* is perpetually dim and often tinged with blue. Blue is a cold colour which is used to denote tranquillity, but also sorrow and coldness<sup>255</sup>. We are told by Ludovika, Elisabeth's mother, about Elisabeth that “there was a shadow on her life”<sup>256</sup> so the dimness of the stage serves as a constant reminder of the “shadow” over her. Combined with the strong lyrics of *Allem Tanzten mit der Tod* (Act 1 Scene 1 Prologue), about Elisabeth’s hatred of formalities and palace life, which I have discussed earlier in chapter 5, serve to set the mood for a tragic story. Because the focus of the story was to faithfully portray the sadness and misery of Elisabeth’s life, the scenery is often sparse and combined with the dim

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<sup>255</sup>The Rosco Guide to color filters: [http://www.rosco.com/us/litreq/catalogs/guide\\_to\\_color\\_filters.pdf](http://www.rosco.com/us/litreq/catalogs/guide_to_color_filters.pdf) - last accessed 6/1/2015

<sup>256</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 1

lighting creates a sense of depression and sadness, completely contrary to Takarazuka's "fantasy adventure".

Adding to this effect are the shadows which are often used in the original musical to symbolise Death, or the approach of Death.<sup>257</sup> They play a large role in reinforcing the main theme of "death" by showing how Elisabeth's life was literally dark, and highlighting her obsession with Death. Most importantly, the Epilogue of the Viennese version is also presented on a dim-lit stage, highlighting how Elisabeth in the end was still surrounded by darkness even after death. This is in complete contrast to Takarazuka's brightly lit, love-triumphant conclusion. Where *Elisabeth* presents death, *Erizabēto* presents romantic "fantasy adventure".

In *Elisabeth* the stage itself is often bare, with minimalistic backgrounds<sup>258</sup>. The main exceptions to this are Act 1 Scene 10 and Act 2 Scene 5. The former uses animal-shaped carts, like the ones at an amusement park, to highlight how people are light-heartedly awaiting the end of the world – hence the title of the accompanying song *Die fröhliche Apokalypse* (The merry apocalypse). The latter has as a stage setting a lit chess-board on which the Empress Dowager Sophie and her advisors scheme to overtake Elisabeth. This chessboard setting, combined with the shadows created by the dimming light, alludes to how the characters are all just pawns in Death's game. These sparse and stark sets and lighting sequences clearly portrayed the darkness and depression of Empress Elisabeth's life and created the atmosphere of sadness and darkness that plagued her constantly. This is also visible in Act 1 Scene 7 (in both the Viennese and the Takarazuka version). The original used a black background for

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<sup>257</sup>See *Elisabeth* 1992 Act 1 Scenes 7 and 9.

<sup>258</sup>See *Elisabeth* 1992 Act 1 Scenes 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12 and 13; and Act 2 Scenes 1,2,3,6,7,8,9, 10, 11, 12,13 and 15 Epilogue

Elisabeth's second meeting with Death, whereas the Takarazuka version employs the use of mirrors to give the scene a feeling of illusion, and alternate reality.

The same approach would not have been suitable for Takarazuka because the "fantasy adventure" requires colour, excitement and richness. I will examine how "fantasy adventure" was achieved throughout this chapter. For example for much of Act 1 Takarazuka has added rich, ornate backgrounds depicting a ballroom.<sup>259</sup> Act 1 Scenes 3 and 6 have lush gardens as a background, and "marble" statues, denoting that the action is taking place at the royal villa. The setting being the royal villa is noted verbally also, and the detail of the background serves to emphasise this fact.

The Epilogue in Act 2 is particularly important in terms of both lighting and scenery. The scene in the Viennese original does not change the light, so the stage is still gloomy, and giving the impression of darkness when Death abandons Elisabeth's body and walks away. Takarazuka's "fantasy adventure" required light, because it is the moment in the musical when love triumphs, so the light is bright and not tinted. More importantly, however, is the rising platform that Tōto and Erizabēto are on that raises them into "heaven", or rather the Other World: Tōto's domain. This is important because it creates the visual representation for the most complete and satisfying of happy endings: true love has conquered, and will last eternally. Also, the rising platform taking the lovers to heaven is used often in "fantasy adventure" particularly in shows such as *Berusaiyu no Bara* (1989, 1990, 1991, 2001, 2006, 2013, 2014), and *Romeo and Juliette*.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>259</sup>Act 1 Scenes 3, 6, 9 and 10. Particularly 9 and 10,

<sup>260</sup>In recent years rising and moving platforms signalling important moments in the show have been used more and more commonly. Further research is required to ascertain whether this is because of an improvement in the available technology, or a conscious stylistic change that has been now proven to

Lighting and scenery are used in the original *Elisabeth* to create a sense of encroachment and darkness that was not translatable into Takarazuka's "fantasy adventure" for which reason they had to be radically altered.

## 6.2 Wardrobe

The Viennese version was intended to depict the tragedy of Elisabeth's life, therefore the costumes had to reflect that darkness, and, while the in the style of the fashion at the time, they lacked the exuberance and richness of Takarazuka costumes. In keeping up with the established style, Takarazuka's rendition of *Elisabeth* employed richly decorated costumes. The costumes were more ornate and colourful than the ones in the Viennese version because the focus of the show was different, and because 'fantasy adventure', as we have seen, requires a certain level of opulence and colour.

The Viennese Death was not the main character, and represented a figment of Elisabeth's imagination, as mentioned earlier. As such, his costumes were not particularly elaborate and he did not have many costume changes (only 2 throughout the entire performance). Unlike his Viennese counterpart, Tōto had 15 costume changes, some more spectacular and bedazzled than others, but overall considerably more decorated than Kröeger's Death. Compared to Death's relatively simple costumes, Tōto's elaborate and rich-looking outfits are much more appropriate for a leading *otokoyaku*, and for Takarazuka's fantasy adventure. The capes, which are employed in Act 1 Scenes 3 and 8, also serve to add grandeur to Tōto's already embellished

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appeal to fans.



appearance.

Death's costumes are a white shirt (the first<sup>261</sup> one with metal embellishments on the shoulders, the second<sup>262</sup> one with a pattern of white-on-white), and black trousers; and also a black costume <sup>263</sup> (jacket, shirt, and trousers) with a diamond-shaped embellishment at the neck. Aside from the modest black costume, both the white shirts expose the chest (albeit, in a V-shape). The costumes were not only simple, and not visually exciting, but also completely unsuited to the *otokoyaku*, who cannot have open necklines which would reveal the padding and binding used to create the masculine shape they have when they perform, removing the dream-like element of their performance which rests on them passing as ideal men. Thus the costumes in the Viennese version were entirely unsuitable for "fantasy adventure".

By contrast, Tōto's costumes are part of the change towards the whimsical and fantastic. The first outfit (act 1 scene 1) is a black, feathered, winged, costume, with spangles across the upper half. It instantly describes his character as other-worldly, and of grand importance. It is also important to note, this costume, as well as the other ones Tōto wears, are not revealing in the slightest, and most of them cover the *otokoyaku* up to their neck. It is in stark contrast to Death's outfit in the original *Elisabeth*, which, as mentioned earlier, was a white shirt (exposing a lot of chest), and black pants. This is consistent with the intended look for Death as a sort of erotic super star, as mentioned earlier.

Tōto's final costume resembles the white and black combination of the original Death, but is still very stylised and rich-looking, illustrating to the end Tōto's rank.

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<sup>261</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 1

<sup>262</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 2, Epilogue.

<sup>263</sup>*Elisabeth* (1992) Act 1 Scene 7, Act 2 Scene 6

Tōto's costumes were not the only ones altered in order to make *Elisabeth* fit “fantasy adventure”. One scene where the changes in style are visible is Act 1 Scene 3, where Elisabeth's family gathers. The scene is brightened for the Takarazuka stage, and the costumes are more opulent, with Heléné's (Erizabēto's older sister) dress (under the spotlight on the left of the stage and again in the photo on the right below) being a pink concoction of frills, lace and ribbons, much more romantic than the sophisticated but subdued period dress in the original (see the photo on the left below) and better suited to Takarazuka's ‘dream world’.



Fig.5 Heléné in the original Viennese version. (1992)



Fig. 6 Heléné (right) and her mother Ludovika (left) (*Erizabēto*, 1996)

In the Viennese version Elisabeth has several costume changes, often tending towards black outside her white sleeping gown (Act 1 Scene 8) and wedding dress (Act 1 Scene 6). Her wardrobe is meant to reflect her confinement by the society in which she lived, and also the fashion of the time. At her most powerful (and beautiful) in *Elisabeth* (act 1 scene 13), she wears an ornate white gown spangled with stars and

sings *Ich gehör nur mir* (I belong only to myself) through which the audience is specifically communicated that she has won against her enemies and is now free, thus, depicting the theme of “freedom”. As mentioned previously, in Chapter 5, this was changed to the theme of “romantic love” for the Takarazuka version. However, the costume employed in Takarazuka is quite similar to the Viennese one, possibly because the richness of the original costume matched well Takarazuka’s performance fashion style.

In the Takarazuka version, Elisabeth's entire wardrobe is also much more varied (with numerous costume changes) but still reflects the changes in her personality from a youthful fifteen year old, to a bitter, lonely woman in the last scene. Particularly



Fig. 7 *Erizabēto* (1996) Act 1 Scene 13  
Erizabēto (Hanafusa Mari)

of note is her gown in Act 1 Scene 13. As we can see from the picture above (fig. 7), the dress is embellished with precious stones, and gold thread. In the original version this

outfit was a simple looking black dress in the style of the time. Takarazuka changed it to the rich looking, “fantasy adventure”-appropriate dress to showcase the power of Erizabēto's beauty. In this scene, she gains the respect and admiration of the Hungarian people by showing her loyalty and respect for Hungary through wearing this dress (which has the national colours of Hungary), and royally declaring “Long live Hungary!” in the Takarazuka version. This makes the plot easier to follow and understand for the Japanese audiences which would not have been aware of the specifics of Austro-Hungarian history.<sup>264</sup>

Perhaps the most crucial change in costumes was done in Act 2 Scene 4 (Act 2 Scene 5 in the Viennese version) with Madame Wolfe. Here, the Emperor’s advisors bring a brothel to the Emperor’s chamber in the hopes that he will be seduced, and Erizabēto’s power over him will weaken when he realises there are plenty of other attractive women aside from her.



Fig.8 *Erizabēto* (1996) Madame Wolfe (Miho Keiko)



Fig.9 *Erizabēto* (1996) One of Madame Wolfe's girls.

<sup>264</sup> It may also be argued that this scene helps create a “fairy tale” image of the royal couple, making them fit better within the “fantasy adventure”.



Fig. 10 *Erizabēto* (1996) Madeleine (Hoshina Yuri) seducing the Emperor (Takane Fubuki) (October 2013)

Since a brothel would not have been an appropriate setting for Takarazuka, which has from its inception applied a strict moral code, was changed, as discussed earlier, to show merely a group of beautiful women visiting Franz Joseph in his private quarters in the palace.

In the Viennese version, the Emperor's advisors go to the brothel and pick a woman to seduce the emperor. In the background an array of women in all states of dishabille dances in a suggestive and lewd manner. Madame Wolfe, who is in charge of the brothel, is dressed immodestly, with a corset, deep neckline and a long skirt with slits to expose her legs, keeps repeating how "manners are not needed"<sup>265</sup> This would have been completely inappropriate for Takarazuka who centers itself on being entertainment for the whole family, and creating "dream worlds." For this reason, the women's costumes were completely altered from overtly sexual and revealing attire to romantic, modest ballerina outfits (see fig.8). Even Madame Wolfe is very modest considering her role as brothel matron (See fig. 7). The Viennese version omits the seduction scene but alludes to it through act 1 scene 6 where Death tells Elisabeth she has caught a venereal disease. This is a direct consequence of her husband's infidelity.

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<sup>265</sup> *Elisabeth* 1992 Act 2 Scene 5,

Such a subject would not have been suitable for Takarazuka's romantic "fantasy adventure", so the scene was changed to show Franz-Joseph being seduced by an "otherworldly beauty", "otherworldly" because, as mentioned earlier, she is one of Tōto's angels. The ballerina that seduces Franz-Joseph is originally shown in a bath-tub, with a mermaid tail. Here once again Takarazuka can be seen trying to create a fantastic "dream world" by invoking fairy tale creatures such as mermaids. The emperor is then told that for dinner he will be served "fish and birds."<sup>266</sup> In true Takarazuka style, the most sexual elements of the original have been removed: there are no lewd gestures, suggestive gyrations, or underwear exposure. The act of seduction involves one dancer dancing *en pointe* (to Tōto's theme) around the Emperor (see Fig. 10) until he gives in and kisses her (at which point Rukīni takes a photo of them that in Act 2 Scene 5 is shown to Erizabēto by Tōto).

Thus we can see how the overtly erotic style of the costumes used in this section of the original version were altered to suit Takarazuka's aesthetic of light-hearted, colourful, innocent dream world. Costumes that were too revealing, too simple or not luxurious would have been inappropriate for the Takarazuka stage, leading to the shift towards more romantic, and fantastic costumes that removed the focus from the drab, depressing, and erotic, and were suitable for creating the visually exciting environment in which "fantasy adventure" could occur.

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<sup>266</sup>Erizabēto (1996) Act 2 Scene 4 "....*tori to sakana de gozaimasu. Madame Worufu no korekushon!*"

## Conclusion

Takarazuka is a Japanese theatre company that has a history of over 100 years. From early in its creative history, it has developed a specific, instantly recognisable and hugely popular style, partly due to the specific style it has developed of adapting plays from other genres. This thesis has traced the development of the Takarazuka style to the present day, its adaptation process and the application of that adaptation process to the case study of one particular adaptation of *Elisabeth* (1992) to *Erizabēto – ai to shi no rondo* (1996)

The humble beginnings of the Takarazuka Revue could not have foretold the eventual success it would have or the metamorphoses it would undergo in order to create a style so unique and so popular. As described in Chapter 2, April 1914 saw the first Takarazuka performance take place in a relatively simple setting. The aesthetic presented was that of quaint amateurish innocence. It was in 1927 that the French Revue inspired *Mon Paris* (1927) brought success. Many staples of modern shows were introduced here, especially the separation between *otokoyaku* and *musumeyaku*. Slowly, the *otokoyaku* became the driving force behind the genre's popularity, and they continue to the present day to be a major feature of its ongoing attraction. A strict moral code emphasising propriety and purity ensured that Takarazuka's early actresses were protected from the common association at that time between performance and prostitution. This allowed Takarazuka to perform more mature material than they had originally intended, without compromising their reputation.

As we saw in Section 2.1 , it was in the late 1920s that Takarazuka began

adapting foreign material for its stage. Particular care was given to eliminating from their versions of foreign material many elements of darkness, overt sexuality or unpleasantness, that the originals may have contained. This adaptation process was identified by theatre scholar Marumoto Takashi as “takarazukalization.” It is in part due to this process that Takarazuka has, over the preceding decades, developed its own quintessential style, centred on romance, opulence, and idealism: creating a dream-like, fairy-tale-like and romantic space. This style, named by former director Kobayashi Kōhei in the 1970s as “fantasy adventure” continues to be a driving force in the staging of shows, in particular non-Japanese shows which did not, in their original form, match Takarazuka’s established style.

This thesis aimed to examine what is meant by the term “fantasy adventure,” and explore how these aesthetics are employed as a model that the production and design team aims towards when adapting works from other genres into the Takarazuka repertory. To this end, it examined how the “fantasy adventure” concept is applied to everything from plot and characterisation to stage design and costumes. This research has focused mainly on the adaptation of the Viennese *Elisabeth* into the Takarazuka *Erizabēto* as a study case for exploring Takarazuka’s “fantasy adventure” aesthetic.

As set out in Chapter 5 the main theme of this Viennese musical was altered from death to romantic love, which was expressed mainly through the new focus on the character of Death/Tōto and his fight to win Elisabeth/Erizabēto’s love. The “takarazukalization” process altered most of the basic elements of the original version, from the title, to the scene order, and the scenes themselves, thereby creating a narrative where romantic love is the pivotal, driving force behind the action. Making Tōto the main character helped with shifting the main theme from death to romantic love, which



is a crucial part of fantasy adventure. His appearances are increased, and his part is greatly developed, in order to make him the ideal man required to introduce and sustain theme of romantic love.

Analysis of the 2 versions revealed how Takarazuka also eliminated some scenes which depicted tragic events, or which were dark, unsettling and too raw and realistic, which would have been incongruent with the romantic and idealistic approach of “fantasy adventure.” We can also see, however, that Takarazuka has retained some of the elements of tragedy to create a strong emotional response from the audience, and enhance the theme of romantic love. What this demonstrates is that “fantasy adventure” restricts the use of tragedy, but does not completely eliminate it; using it instead to strengthen the romance element of the story. As we have seen from Chapter 5, the thematic elements of *Erizabēto* are distinctly different from those of the original Viennese version with its focus on death, absolute freedom and tragedy. By changing the plot, the scene order, and the dialogue, Takarazuka aligned *Elisabeth* with its “fantasy adventure” aesthetic, which, as we have seen, centres on romance.

Chapter 6 then examined how Takarazuka also ensured that the scenes would visually fit its aesthetic, by brightening the set lighting, changing spotlight focuses, and adding colour and detailed embellishments to the stage backgrounds. The Takarazuka version was redesigned to be opulent and suitable for a “dream world,” while the lighting was made brighter and less tinted, to showcase the luxurious costumes and the “dream world” sets. Costumes, as discussed in Section 6.2 were likewise adapted to include more colour, and more romantic style elements. In this way, the adaptation process made the visual elements of the Takarazuka version congruous with its established style.

In conclusion we can clearly state that it was the combination of all these literary, narrative, and visual changes to the Viennese *Elisabeth* that made this story suitable for the Takarazuka repertoire. Moreover, the impressive success and popularity of *Erizabēto - ai to shi no rondo* over a number of years demonstrates the success of that adaptation process because, surely, an unsuccessful adaptation that left in elements considered by audiences to be unsuitable to their preferred style would have led to a box office failure. Takarazuka's ongoing focus on the creation of "fantasy adventure" and "dream world" aesthetics has dictated its performance style for many decades, and has helped set it apart from other theatres. It will be interesting to see how this focus will continue to develop and affect the material that Takarazuka chooses to perform from here onwards.

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